3: Tauxier--1 G-4, 5 (1908-1923) 1924 FA28 Mossi FA28

FIRST BOOK

Chapter 1

The Origins of the Mossi

974 Most of the people who have dealt with the history of the Mossi have said that they come from the southeast, from the region of Gambakha or Gambaga (Dagomba). From there they are said to have occupied successively, going toward the north, the regions of Fada-N'Gourma, Ouagadougou, and Ouahigouya.

But before that where did they come from?

Captain Lambert, who commanded the circle of Ouagadougou in 1906-07, has tried to find an answer to this question in his study of the Mossi country, published in the Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de l'Afrique Occidentale française /Bulletin of the Geographic Society of French West Africa/, 1908.

174 171 "South of Bornu," he writes (op. cit. No. 7, page 166), "in the German Cameroons, people still exist who are known as Mossah and who, according to local tradition, were once master of the whole country. At present they are confined to a rather restricted area (the valley of Logone-Cameroons).

"The Mossah today bear such a striking physical resemblance to the Mossi that one could not have lived among them without recognizing the similarities; the tattooing is identical except for the circumflex accent which has been more recently acquired, as we shall demonstrate. The physical resemblance is almost total, and, besides, the Mossah have the same social organization as the Mossi, with all its characteristic hierarchy. In brief, /2/ there is no doubt as to the common origin of the two groups, and we can be certain that the presence of the Mossah in one part of Bornu and their traditional supremacy in the country in bygone days establish with certainty the habitat where the people we are dealing with must have been formed and developed. All this, of course, occurred during a period long before the events that allowed the Arab chroniclers to reveal their existence to us." (1)

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1. Actually, these "Arab chroniclers" is simply Es-Sadi, the author of Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/, who wrote as late as the seventeenth century. As a matter of fact, it was the Portuguese writer, the great historian and geographer, Jean de Barros, author of l'Asia (1552-53), who was the first to reveal the existence of the Mossi in the sixteenth century. Léon, the African, did not know of them, nor did the Arab geographers and historians of the Middle Ages. Let us add that one should verify exactly in the area whether the Mossah resemble the Mossi other than by name. The matter has become relatively easy since the French occupation of the Cameroons.

171 Captain Lambert adds in a note:
174 "A new question arises here: can one consider the Mossi as being autochthonous to Bornu, or should their long stay in that region be considered as a step in the great migratory movement that, in successive phases, has brought them to the heart of the Niger estuary?

"In the present state of our knowledge, it would be unwise to take a firm position. We shall merely show that the feudal system that characterizes the political constitution of the Mossi can be compared to the system prevalent in Abyssinia. The hierarchical set-up seems to be identical in certain respects; leaders are appointed under analogous conditions, and the election of the Negus is accompanied by a period of anarchy which we also find here and which seems to go back to ancient traditions.

174 "It may well be that this goes beyond pure coincidence. While
197 we were in the process of editing a small dictionary of the Mossi language, we took the trouble to find out whether the dialects spoken in Abyssinia were likely to give us some clues on this point. We must admit, however, that the vocabularies of the Galla, Ahmaris /sic/, and Tigré languages that we consulted have not provided us /3/ with convincing arguments. But it is a proven fact today that, from the

viewpoint of ethnographic research, text similarities do not mean very much, and idioms that are not fixed by writing may, within a few centuries, become deformed to the extent of being unrecognizable. While the value of grammatical comparisons is much more important, we have unfortunately had neither the time nor the means to make use of this method. We will, therefore, merely indicate this point of view which, in our opinion, could lead to fruitful observations. On the other hand, missionaries have claimed that the Mossi traditionally would have preserved the symbolic notion of the Christian cross, a fact we have been unable to verify and which, without being impossible a priori, seems unlikely."

After this parenthesis about the distant origins of the Mossi, Captain Lambert continues:

"It is indeed highly probable, and here again, lacking written documents, we have only oral traditions to base our opinions on, that the Mossi people, split up by the impact of a Moslem invasion from the east, must have, through successive waves and losing ground in the opposite direction, spread further toward the west, so that the Mossi-bé (1), who still form several agglomerations in the western

1. Mossi-bé is simply the plural of the word Mossi in Peuhle /Peul/ language.

part of Sokoto and even in the Dounzou circle and who also show striking analogies with the Mossi proper, can also be used as a reference. (Captain Lambert adds in a note: "Among the Mossi-bé we find the circumflex accent which would complete the ethnic tatooing of the Mossi as it is today. This mark rightly belongs to the natives of the left bank of the Niger river up to the angle formed by the Dollol-Maouri.") These agglomerations indicate, in a very approximate fashion, the location of the Mossi empire at the historical period that evidently marks its apogee of power; toward 1350, as we saw /4/ in the Tarikh, Timbuktu was conquered by the sultan of Mossi."

The incident to which Captain Lambert refers here is the conquest of Timbuktu by the Mossi (in 1333 exactly, according to the most advanced calculations) (1), which is mentioned by Es-Sadi in

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1. See the book by Lieutenant Marc, Le Pays Mossi /The Land of the Mossi/, pp. 136-138. The author sets the date of the fall of Timbuktu to the Mossi at 1333 or 1334. Delafosse, in his book Haut-Sénegal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, took the date of 1333. Binger (op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 481, 482) gives the date of 1329 according to the Tarikh, but assumes it to be wrong and that it was in 1326 that the Mossi, who he says were then part of the kingdom of Mali, captured Timbuktu for the sake of and by the order of the Mali kings. We know now that this assumption is false, that the Mossi were never under the domination of Mali, and that they sacked Timbuktu on their own behalf in 1333. Besides, the Malinké recaptured Timbuktu fairly soon thereafter and held it until 1433, at which time the leader Targui Akil took possession. The Mossi expedition against Timbuktu was, everything considered, nothing more than a raid, perfectly executed, but without any follow-up.

the Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/; but one cannot conclude, as Captain Lambert does, that in the fourteenth century the Mossi were still living on the east bank of the Niger River, in what today is Djerma, and that they had not yet reached, at that time, the Mossi of today, nor even the Dagomba, and that it was from Djerma that they conducted their triumphant raid on Timbuktu. If the Mossi really did come from Bornu and ended up in Dagomba, and, as is only natural, spread on to Haoussa and Djerma (2), they did so in the very

2. As a matter of fact, one can explain the Mossi colonies of Sokoto as having come from the regions of Ouagadougou, Yatenga, or Fada N'Gourma at a relatively recent date, the thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth centuries.

114 distant past, since we must place Rawa, the first conqueror of
174 Ouagadougou and Ouahigouya (see further on), in the twelfth century A.D., and his parents came from Dagomba where it is clear the Mossi have lived for some time. The crossing of Haoussa and Djerma by the forefathers of the Dagomba Mossi takes us back to a period that obviously cannot be precisely established, but which is definitely earlier than the fourteenth century (when the Mossi conquered Timbuktu), and one must recognize, contrary to Captain Lambert's opinion, that the Mossi who took Timbuktu came from the south (probably from Ouahigouya) and not from the east (the Say region). We would like to point out /5/ also that they were a great deal closer to Timbuktu in Ouahigouya than in Say. Once this point has been cleared up and the ensuing mistakes corrected, the plausibility of the discovery of the road followed by the Mossi who came from Bornu (if they came from there), which was re-traced by Captain Lambert, is acceptable.

These observations also apply to the continuation of Captain Lambert's report. He says that the wars waged by the second Songhaï empire against the Mossi (sixteenth century) forced the latter to leave the Djerma country to go southwest toward Dagomba. Obviously, all of this is quite inaccurate, but, without accepting Captain Lambert's cause for the emigration and his establishing it further in the past, we can accept the route he traces.

174 "This movement," says Captain Lambert, speaking of the march from Djerma to Dagomba, "took place in a southerly direction, and the Mossi, after having followed the Niger River, crossed it at a point located between Say and Ilo, but much closer to Ilo.

[301] "North of Ilo, the custom of shaving the heads of the chieftains'
[302] wives still persists. These women also wear metal leggings (1), par-

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1. Captain Lambert undoubtedly is referring to the beautiful copper leggings, about 20 centimeters high, worn by the rich Mossi women.

ticularly characteristic of the Mossi peoples and sometimes encountered among peoples who have been in contact with them.

"From this point, the migration, leaving the Bariba country on the left (2), went in a straight line through Gourma and the Pama region

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2. One may wonder whether the Bariba were not part of this Mossi or pre-Mossi migration, since the Bariba have certain points of resemblance, from a sociological viewpoint, with the Mossi: like the Mossi, they are warrior-horsemen, pillagers, and courageous. On the other hand, Delafosse (Vocabulaires comparatifs /Comparative Vocabularies/) wonders, on page 224, if one should not connect the Bariba to the Mossi-Gourounsi, from a linguistic viewpoint.

173 Also, Captain Lambert says in a note on page 170: "The leader of Djougou (Dahomey) is of Mossi origin. Tradition claims that the inhabitants of this village, divided by internal strife brought about by the rivalry of several pretenders to power, offered the leadership to a weaver who had been living for a long time in Djougou where he most certainly kept out of local squabbles; the latter refused the offer. But the people of Djougou refused to give up and made him a prisoner in his hut. Having to choose between the disadvantages of power and his own captivity, the weaver could not but make a decision; at the end of the sixth day, he consented to take command. His descendants have succeeded him since that time without interruption, and, in memory of the incident described, a custom was set up which requires that the new leader remain enclosed in his hut for the six days following his election."

174 as far as Gambakha, the present-day capital of the northern territories /6/ of the English colony of the Gold Coast. This is where the leader who had organized the exodus chose his residence. We have no positive information about him as a person, but it is certain that the establishment of the Mampoursi and Dagomba kingdom can be traced to him or his immediate successors."

174 [174] Captain Lambert adds in a note: "According to Colonel M.-P. Northcott, the founder of the Gambakha dynasty was called Tosogo; but the information that he provides about him seems hardly in agreement with the tradition we are relying upon here." (See Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold-Coast, London, 1890).

Captain Lambert continues as follows:

"The creation of the actual Mossi empire came later; it is nevertheless safe to assert that from that period on, some of the new inhabitants of Mampoursi undertook to open a passage toward the north and achieved it in two different ways. One group, after leaving Gambakha, pushed the Boussanga back into the region they occupy today and reached Bêloussa country where they spread toward the west and north, occupying a vast stretch of land which is today almost exclusively inhabited by the Mossi. The other group, blazing a path in Nankana country, went north of Tiébélé and pushed the Boussanga back from the opposite side, thus crushing them in a vice, so to speak, and spread out in the country circumscribed by the Red Volta, toward Ouagadougou.

"One has only to glance at a map of the Mossi country to recognize the direction of these two parallel movements which came together north of the present-day Boussangsé, an almost uninhabited region at the time of the great Mossi migration. It was there that the autochthonous Boussanga, who were then occupying the whole Tenkodogo country, were forced to find refuge and have since been just existing, hostile to any fusion with the invader."

173 Captain Lambert then goes on to the legend of the origins of the true Mossi empire:

"A naba of the Gambakha (the Gambakha, as we have seen, were directly descended from the leader who had led the great immigration to the Mampoursi River), having reached the end of his life without an heir, believed this fact to be a fulfillment of destiny. Nothing in this world is permanent, and doubtless his glorious dynasty had to make way for a new line of leaders. He was at least resigned to this, but his lonely old age was what saddened him above all else. He therefore implored the spirits to give him a child, pronouncing the solemn vow that he would dedicate it to virginity, whether it be a boy or girl. As if by a miracle, a girl was born to him at once. He called her Pogotoenga (woman of the tree) (1), considering her, therefore, from

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have founded the Fada-N'Gourma dynasty; and Rawa, his eldest brother (in Mossi, "Rawa" means the courageous, the strong), is supposed to have founded the Rawatenga dynasty which has since become the Yatenga. As for the Ouagadougou dynasty, it was indeed Oubri, son of Zoungourana, who is said to have founded it. On this last point, all the traditions are in agreement, the one on which Captain Lambert bases his theories, as well as those of Moulins and Vadier.

most powerful. The relations between the naba of Ouagadougou and [631] those of Tenkodogo and Gourma, their cousins, were always those of a sovereign to his vassal (5).

5. It is unlikely that this situation prevailed from the beginning, since the higher authority should have been that of the Tenkodogo naba. But when the Mossi kingdom of Ouagadougou subsequently became the more powerful, it established its primacy over the neighboring, less powerful kingdoms of Tenkodogo and Fada-N'Gourma.

"Their common ancestor, Zunghrama, died in Komtoéga, where his grave is still shown."

●174 In conclusion, Captain Lambert states:

1. That the Mossi come from south of Bornu, an area still inhabited by a people, the Mossah, who greatly resemble them. /9/

2. That the Mossi went through Haoussa and Djerma in order to come to Dagomba.

3. That the Mossi of today come from those of Dagomba.

He also states, but we can ignore this claim as being absolutely contrary to the facts known to us today, that the journey from Djerma to Dagomba was made during or after the sixteenth century A. D. and was occasioned by the crusades that the second Songhaï empire

174 led against the Mossi. In fact, the Mossi had left Dagomba long before the fourteenth century and occupied their present sites, including Yatenga.

173 Dr. Ruelle as well admits that the Mossi came from the east before settling in Dagomba. "The same tradition," he says (1), "has

1. L'Anthropologie /Anthropology/, Vol. XV (1904), p. 675. The tradition mentioned refers to the tradition of the old people.

it that warriors who came from the east defeated at Gambakha the Dagomba tribe who was them master of the land, and they set up their own leader. His daughter, Ouiaraouga, fell in love with an elephant hunter with whom she ran away, and, as her father tried to apprehend her, she took refuge in Tenkodogo. There she married the local chief, a Boussanga called Zangoumana, whose grave in Komterga is still a place of pilgrimage for the Mossi. Their son, Bougoum, after several expeditions in that region, conquered Koupéla. He, in turn, had three sons: Houbri, Nabakéré, and Kouda, all of whom made further conquests. The first pushed on as far as Yako, made Ouagadougou his capital, and forced his two brothers to recognize him as suzerain." (2)

2. I quote this version which is somewhat different from the others and which also has some mistakes since the name of "Ouiaraouga" (Ouidiraogo, "stallion, male horse") is given to the young girl whom the other traditions call Poko, Pokotoéga, Yennenga, etc. The name rightfully belongs to her son and not to her. It should be noted that Zoungourana (or Zangoumana) here becomes a Boussanga, the second husband of the ex-maiden, daughter of the king of Dagomba.

174 Lieutenant Marc also believes that the Mossi originated in the east. "Where did the Mossi come from when they arrived in the

174 country of Gambaga?" he asks (op. cit., p. 134). "It is rather difficult to /10/ speak authoritatively on this subject: probably from the central African Sudan, the region of the Chad. All Mossi traditions are unanimous in placing their country of origin very far in the east ..."

Lieutenant Marc had already said on page 130, "Local traditions have it that the Mossi come from very far in the east. Very long ago, they occupied a country located beyond the Niger River, whose capital was called Aliaman. This country is presently inhabited by the Songhai. Then the Mossi came to live in Dagomba, defeated its inhabitants, and the leader of the Mossi settled in Gambaga." (1)

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1. There follows the legend of the daughter of the king of Gambakha. She is wrongly called Ouidiraogo, "stallion," as in Dr. Ruelle's version. Lieutenant Marc goes on to make another mistake by saying that Ouidiraogo means "hoof" (instead of male horse). Zoungourana (whom Lieutenant Marc calls Zoungourouma or Zougourouma) is presented here, as he was by Dr. Ruelle, as the second husband of the daughter of the king of Gambakha and as a Boussansé king. In Lieutenant Marc's version, he "waged war against his father-in-law and conquered the whole country from Gambaga to Koupéla." Then "Zougourouma had three sons: Séré, Oubri, and Couda. The first became naba of Boussouma; the second, Naba Oubri, conquered the country of Ouagadougou, set up his capital there, and took possession of Yatenga. Naba Oubri is considered by the Mossi as the first of the Moro-naba and founder of the present dynasty. His successors were his brother Couda, and then his son Nigamenda."

174 In this tradition reported by Lieutenant Marc, there is obviously an element of Moslem imaginations; Aliaman probably designates

174 Yemen. But the indication that this country is presently inhabited by the Songhay /sic/ certainly points to Djerma or Zaberma, slightly east of the Niger River in the Say and Dosso region. By dissociating the Moslem legend (undoubtedly created by some Yarsé Moslem of the Mossi) from the rest of the tale, one still comes back to the temporary and distant occupation of Djerma by the ancestors of the Mossi.

174 114 Delafosse, on the other hand, contrary to Dr. Ruelle, Captain Lambert, and Lieutenant Marc, although, like the others, he has the Mossi come from Dagomba to their present habitat (see Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, Vol. I, pp. 305-310), seems disinclined to accept the idea of an eastern origin. He says (page 310, in a note), "Lieutenant Marc seems to want to attribute an eastern 174 origin to the Mossi. To strengthen his hypothesis, he says that the 171 organization of the court of the Morho nâba (emperors of the Mossi) 644 is unique in western Africa, while there are /11/ equivalents in 114 Haoussa, Bornu, etc. I should like to point out that this argument is of little value, precisely because, contrary to Lieutenant Marc's theory, one finds in all ancient states of western Africa (Ghana, Mali, Tekrour, Gao, Dahomey, Benin, etc.) an organization absolutely analogous to that of the Mossi court (see part IV of this work and compare with the reports of Arab geographers and early European travelers)." 174 Of course I agree with Delafosse in not finding Lieutenant 114 Marc's argument very penetrating (1), but Ruelle, Lambert, and

1. Here is the argument as developed by Lieutenant Marc (op. cit., p. 134, 135):

> "The feudal organization of the Mossi country, the court of the Moro-Naba, its pages, and its eunuchs, are all unique in western Africa. On the other hand, the black monarchs, as they are known in central Africa, seem to live in a setting that greatly resembles the one in which the Moro-Naba lives. The sultans of Zinder, Bornu, and Wadai have also a court, eunuchs, and pages. The little we know about the organization of their empires seems rather similar to what we have seen among the Mossi. But our

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documentation on this matter is not extensive enough to enable us to attempt a comparative study."

Marc do not base themselves exclusively on this argument. They also use a tradition of the Mossi themselves, and it would doubtless be unwise to reject it without examining it further. An argument that could be cited in favor of a very ancient occupation of Djerma by the ancestors of the Mossi is Binger's following remark: "The Mossi must [171 417] have remained in contact with the Touareg /Tuareg/ for a fairly long time (2) ... since they partially adopted their dress and use, as they do, the crutch-handled [poignée en croix] saber."

2. In this quotation, I have omitted the word "after," since Binger assumes that the Mossi, after taking Timbuktu in 1326 by order of the Mali, remained there until 1433, having, therefore, one century of contact with the Touareg. In reality, the Mossi stayed in Timbuktu only a very short time, and this raid could not have given them a prolonged contact with the Touareg, from whom they were separated before the fall of Timbuktu, and again as soon as they left the town, by the entire Songhaï country stretching along the banks of the Niger River. On the contrary, if they had formerly occupied Djerma, before the Djermabé or the Songhaï, one can easily understand this contact with the Touareg as well as the existence of the sword with the short crutch-handle /poignée en croix (Binger wrongly calls this straight sword a saber). In addition, when Binger speaks of the Targui /Tuareg/ dress, adopted [291] in part by the Mossi, he doubtless thinks of the lithâm (or face veil) which was then worn by the Mossi horsemen. At the present time, they are no longer worn, and I have never seen them among the Mossi, where I lived 1908-1909.

174 do, the crutch-handled /poignée en croix/ saber."
114 Actually, we must admit that we know nothing certain about the Mossi outside of Dagomba. This is what I /12/ clearly stated in my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/ (1917) (1). The move into

1. See pp. 57 and 58.

Djerma is conjectural, and the question concerning the Mossah would have to be settled by an inquiry made in the Cameroons. At one
174 time I was tempted to connect the Mossi with the races of the south,
197 the Agni-Achanti /Ashanti/, and it seems certain that close relationships exist (2) between the numerical vocabularies of the Voltaic

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2. See Appendix No. I. In addition, a woman called Aoura-Poko plays as important a part in the Baoulé historic tradition as in the Mossi historic tradition. And, although the word for woman is oba, eba, bla in Achanti, Abron, and Baoulé, the Baoulé heroine is called Poko, like Poko (woman) or Pokotoéga (woman of the baobab) of the Mossi tradition.

group and the Agni-Achanti group. But can one base a linguistic comparison on vocabulary alone? It would also have to be proven, grammatically speaking, that the Voltaic linguistic group is very close to the Agni-Achanti group. (3) And this has not yet been done.

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3. Delafosse says that there is no special relation between these two groups from a grammatical viewpoint. In a more general manner, Delafosse would now like to believe, as far as Mossi origins are concerned, that Mossi residence in their present country goes back far before the eleventh century A. D. Apparently only a band of pillagers and happy warriors, a princely dynasty came

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hom Gambakha in the eleventh century to found small kingdoms in a country which had already been colonized by the Mossi. However, there is a drawback to this opinion: the existence among the Mossi of an autochthonous people (Nioniossé or Foulsé /Fulse/) still extant, who are far from having, always and everywhere, merged with the Mossi. According to my observations made in the area (I spent three years in Yatenga, from 1913 to 1916), there are still more Nioniossé than Mossi in Yatenga, 100, 000 as against 70, 000 (see my Noir du Yatenga, pages 665 and 666). The existence of this earlier people proves that the Mossi colonization is a relatively recent one. Also, the Mossi could not have penetrated and survived in an already inhabited region in any way other than by forming small, conquering military monarchies. I think therefore, that the Mossi came, with their chiefs, from Dagomba, and that they didn't reach the present Mossi country until ... But we are coming back to the chronological question which we will deal with later on.

174 For the moment, then, we are still reduced to dealing with hypotheses insofar as the origins of the Mossi are concerned. We know that the Mossi come from Dagomba and that they probably entered the country as conquerors. But where did they come from then? From the north-east? From the south? From the east? We cannot yet answer with certainty, just as we cannot for so many other historical, philosophical, and scientific questions, alas!

Grammatici certant et adhuc sub judice lis est.

174 /13/ This lack of certainty concerning the origins of the Mossi
141 should not prevent us from treating the anthropological question of the Mossi. On the contrary, for it is quite evident that, while linguistics can give us valuable information about the origins and affinities of the Mossi, anthropology can give us even more valuable and far-reaching information since, as we know, it is obviously easier for a people to change its language than the form of its skull. Let us, therefore, look to anthropology and consult Dr. Ruelle to find out what the Mossi are from a somatic viewpoint.

14 Dr. Ruelle, in the work cited below (1), has worked with 100
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1. L'Anthropologie, Vol. XV (1904), pp. 519-561 and 657-703.

Mossi men (unfortunately, he did not measure women, which is a regrettable shortcoming and can invalidate certain averages, for instance, the ones concerning stature). From the viewpoint of skin color, which he generally finds dark brown (not only for the Mossi but for the other tribes of the IInd military territory which he studied at the same time as the Mossi), he gives for the Mossi the following numbers on Broca's chromatic scale:

70 Mossi out of 100 have no. 42
14 Mossi out of 100 have no. 41
19 Mossi out of 100 have no. 37 (2)
[519]

2. Page 522.

For the horizontal cephalic index:

2 Mossi have 65
4 Mossi have 68
4 Mossi have 69
2 Mossi have 70
3 Mossi have 71
13 Mossi have 72
17 Mossi have 73
5 Mossi have 74
15 Mossi have 75
11 Mossi have 76
7 Mossi have 77
8 Mossi have 78
6 Mossi have 79
1 Mossi has 80
2 Mossi have 81 (3)

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Chapter 2

Mossi Chronology

174 Mossi chronology is still a hypothetical construction, at least insofar as the beginnings of Mossi history are concerned. Since the beginning of the fifteenth century, historians are almost in agreement, and for the eighteenth century they have reached complete accord. Delafosse, in his Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/ (1912), has given a complete chronology of the Mossi (the regions of Ouagadougou, Yatenga, and Fada-N'Gourma) (1), while I have traced

1. See Vol. I, pp. 306-312, and Vol. II, pp. 126, 139-140 and 149-150.

one myself in my Noir du Soudan: Pays Mossi et Gourounsi /Blacks of the Sudan: Country of the Mossi and Gourounsi/ (1912), for the naba of Ouagadougou (2). In 1917, I took up this question more

2. See pp. 458-462. In truth, these pages do not give an actual chronological list, but there are various indications from which one can deduce the dates referring to the kings of Ouagadougou which I have given on page 674 of my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/, under the title : "Chronologie du Mossi (région de Ouagadougou /Chronology of the Mossi (region of Ouagadougou)/, from my Noir du Soudan /Blacks of the Sudan/, 1912" (Appendix No. V).

thoroughly in my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/ (pp. 667-677). I give here these three different chronologies insofar as they concern Yatenga, that is, the northern kingdom of all the Mossi, which is the one that dealt with the Mali, the Songhaï, and the Bambara throughout the ages— which is the one, therefore, for which we have some points

174 of reference given us by the chroniclers of Timbuktu or by the Portuguese. Once these chronologies have been set down, we shall be able to discuss them again with the help of an important bit of information which is given by the Tarikh-el-Fettach /History of Fettac./:

174 Mossi Kings 173	Delafosse's Chronology	Tauxier 1912	Tauxier 1917
Nédéga (Dagomba)	1000	"	1233
Riâlé	"	"	1253
Ouidiraogo	dead in 1050	"	1273 /17/
Rawa	11 century	"	1293
Oubri	1050-1090	1175-1199	1313
Ouemtanango	1130	"	1333
Yadega	1170	"	1353
Yaouloumfao	1200-1225	"	1360
Guéda	"	"	
Tounougoum	"	"	1360-1375
Possinga	"	"	
Nasségué	1320-1340	"	1375-1385
Somna	"	"	
Vanté-Baragouan	1350-1380	"	1385-1395
Bonga	1380-1410	"	1395-1415
Sougounoum	1410-1430	"	1415-1430
Kissoum	1430-1435	"	1430
Zangayella	1435-1460	"	1430-1450
Lanlasse	1460-1475	"	1450-1475
Nassodoba	1475-1500	"	1475-1505
Yamba	1500-1530	"	1505-1535
Niago	1530-1560	"	1535-1565
Parima	1560-1590	"	1565-1595
Koumpaougoum	1590-1620	"	1595-1625
Nabasséré	1620-1660	"	1625-1655
Toussourou	1660-1690	"	1655-1685
Sini	1690-1720	"	1685-1720
Pigo	1720-1739	"	1720-1739
Ouabégo	1739-1754	"	1739-1754
Kango	1754-1787	"	1754-1787
Sagha	1787-1803	"	1787-1803

174 Kaogo	1803-1806	"	1803-1306
173 Tougouri	1806-1822	"	1806-1822
Kom	1822-1825	"	1822-1825
Ragongo	1825-1831	"	1825-1831
Ridimba	1831	"	1831
Diogoré	1831-1834	"	1831-1834
Totébalobo	1834-1850	"	1834-1850
Yemdé	1850-1877	"	1850-1877
Sanoum	1877-1879	"	1877-1879
Noboga	1879-1884	"	1879-1884
Pigo II	1884-1885	"	1884-1885
Baogo	1885-1895	"	1885-1894
Bagaré	1895-1899	"	1894-1899
Liguidi	1899-1902	"	1899-1902
Koboga	since 1902	"	1902-1914

174 First of all, we can note that there is, I think, a slight confusion in the beginning /18/ of Delafosse's chronology. As a matter of fact, he counts (Vol. I, page 306) 40 years per generation, and, on the other hand (Vol. II, page 126), he places Oubri approximately from 1050 to 1090. But Oubri was the son of Zoungourana, himself the son of Ouidiraogo, himself the son of the princess Yennenga, himself the son of Nédéga, the king who ruled in Dagomba. There are, then, four generations from Nédéga to Oubri, which must make 160 years, according to Delafosse's calculations, and, if Oubri is to be placed between 1050 and 1090, that would put his great-great-grandfather Nédéga at about 890, that is, at the end of the ninth century A. D., or at least in 910, that is, at the beginning of the tenth century (1).

1. I have already noted this in my Noir du Yatenga, p. 673 (Appendix No. IV).

In this last case, the approximate dates would be the following:

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Nédéga.....about 910
Yennenga.....about 950
Ouidiraogo.....about 990
Zoungourana.....about 1030
Oubri..... between 1050 and 1090

174 This would definitely place Nédéga, the king of Dagomba, his daughter, Yennenga, and his grandson, Ouidiraogo, in the tenth century, then Zoungourana (with his brothers Rawa and Diaba) and Oubri in the eleventh century.

This said, the fact remains that the Mossi chronology of the tenth to the fourteenth century is not settled, and it would be interesting to find some information that would make possible a true approximation.

As it happens, there is an existing text of the second appendix of the Tarikh-el-Fettach /History of Fettach/ which can throw light on this darkness. In the name of a certain Songhaï king, Baraï, it is said, in fact, that the king of the Mossi waged war against him (2).

2. Tarikh-el-Fettach, Houdas translation, p. 333.

We do not know, however, which Mossi king, since the Tarikh-el-Fettach does not give his name, but before looking into the long list of Mossi kings to find out who this aggressor might have been, one would have to fix, at least approximately, the date of that Baraï.

This then forces us to establish the whole chronology /19/ of the Sonraï /sic/, also a very approximative chronology which varies according to whether we consult the Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/ or the Tarikh-el-Fettach.

Let us see first how one could establish, even in a schematic and grossly approximative fashion, the chronology of the Songhaï princes according to the Tarikh-es-Soudan.

This chronicle gives only one date up to the time of Sonni-Ali-Ber: that of Kosoï, who was converted to Islam in the year 400 of the Hegira, that is, in 1009-10 A. D. (1), but it gives the dates of Sonni-

1. Tarikh-es-Soudan, Houdas translation, p. 5.

Ali-Ber and the Askias who succeeded him from 1464-65 to 1591, the period of the Moroccan conquest.

We can first point out that, for the princes for whom we have the exact dates (Sonni-Ali and the Askias), 126 or 127 years are given for ten reigns, which makes each reign approximately 13 years. We can apply this average to all the Songhay princes: thus, since

174 we are counting from Za Alayaman to Issihak II, 58 Songhay princes, this dates the beginning of these princes at about the year 837 A. D.

On the other hand, we must be aware of the fact that we have the approximate date of Ali Kolon's reign (or Ali Kolen, or Ali Golom, or Ali Kilnou), who freed the Songhay from the Mali suzerainty a little after the reign of Kankan-Moussa and during that temporary period of weakness which enabled the Mossi to raid Timbuktu (1333). Delafosse (2) puts the flight of Ali Kolen from the court of the Mali

2. Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, Vol. II, p. 73.

king and his victorious defense against the pursuing Mali people in the year 1335. Before him, Binger (3) had dated this flight in the year

3. Du Niger au golfe de Guinée /From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea/, Vol. II, p. 368. See also page 371.

1331, during the reign of the weak Magha I, successor of Kankan-Moussa who reigned from 1331 to 1335. We can take 1333 as an average date, and it is conceivable that the fall of Timbuktu to the Mossi, which occurred in that year, helped in the restoration of Songhaï independence.

174 /20/ On the basis of this data, we have:
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1.	Za Alayaman	837-849
2.	Zakoï	849-861
3.	Takoï	861-873
4.	Akoï	873-885
5.	Kou	885-897
6.	Ali Faï	897-909
7.	Biyaï Komaï	909-921
8.	Biyaï	921-933
9.	Karaï	933-945
10.	Yama-Karaouï'a	945-957
11.	Yama	957-969
12.	Yama-Danka-Kibao	969-981

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13.	Koukoraï	981-993
14.	Kenken	993-1005
15.	Kosoï (about 1009-1010)	1005-1025
16.	Kosaï-Dariyâ	1025-1044
17.	Hen-Kon-Ouanko-Dam	1044-1063
18.	Biyaï-Koï-Kimi	1063-1082
19.	Nintâsanaï	1082-1101
20.	Biyaï-Kaïna-Kimba	1101-1120
21.	Kaïna-Chinyounbo	1120-1139
22.	Tib	1139-1158
23.	Yama-Dao	1158-1177
24.	Fadazou	1177-1196
25.	Ali-Koro	1196-1215
26.	Bir-Foloko	1215-1235
27.	Yasiboï	1235-1255
28.	Douro	1255-1275
29.	Zenko-Bâro	1275-1295
30.	Bisi-Bâro	1295-1315
31.	Bada	1325-1332
32.	Ali-Kolon (about 1333)	1333-1340
33.	Selman-Nâri	1340-1347
34.	Ibrahim Kabaï	1347-1354
35.	Otsmân Kanafa	1354-1362
36.	Bar-Kaïna-Ankabi	1362-1370
37.	Mousa	1370-1378
38.	Bokar-Zonka	1378-1386
39.	Bokar-Dalla-Boyonbo	1386-1394
40.	Mar Kiraï	1394-1402
41.	Mohammed Dâo	1402-1410
42.	Mohammed Koukiya	1410-1418
43.	Mohammed Fâr	1418-1426
44.	Karbifô	1426-1434
45.	Mar-Fâl-Kolli-Djimo	1434-1442
46.	Mar Arkena	1442-1449
47.	Mar Arandan	1449-1456
48.	Selimân Dam	1456-1464

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49.	Sonni Ali Ber	1464-1492
50.	Askia El-Hadj Mohammed	1493-1528
51.	Askia Moussa	1528-1531
52.	Askia Mohammed II	1531-1537
53.	Askia Ismaïl	1537-1539
54.	Askia Issihak I	1539-1549
55.	Askia Daoud	1549-1582
56.	Askia Mohammed III	1582-1586
57.	Askia Mohammed Bani	1586-1588
58.	Askia Issihak II	1588-1591

I underlined in this list the name of Bir Foloko (1215-1235), because he is the king of the Tarikh-es-Soudan list who corresponds to the Baraï of the Tarikh-el-Fettach list.

174 Concerning the dates which one can get from the Tarikh-el-Fettach, they consist of three notations:

1) A giant, originally from Yemen, who lived toward the middle of the fourth century of the Hegira (1), that is, counting 350 years

1. Tarikh-el-Fettach, Houdas and Delafosse translation, p. 329.

from the Hegira, around 961 A. D.

2) The date of conversion to Islam of the people of Gao which took place, according to El-Motaouakkel Kâti, between 471 and 475 of the Hegira, that is, between 1079 and 1082 A. D. (2)

2. Ibid., pp. 332-333.

3) And the date of Mâkara-Komsoû, who was contemporary with Kankan-Moussa's pilgrimage to Mecca in the year 720 of the Hegira, or 1321-22 A. D. (3) This Mâkara-Komsoû was the 33rd king of

3. Ibid., p. 335.

Songhay, according to the list given by Mahmoud Kâti.

174 On the basis of these three notations, a chronological list of the Songhay princes can be established in accordance with the Tarikh-el-Fettach, making a note of the fact that 360 years (961 to 1321) are given for 33 princes, which makes an average of approximately 11 years per prince. On the other hand, one is led to think that the date of the conversion to Islam of the people of Gao gives the date of Kotso-Moslem (Kotso the Mussulman) and that, therefore, we can place this prince at about 1079-82, that is, at approximately 1080. /22/ True, the Tarikh says that it was not Kotso-Moslem who converted the people of Gao to Islam and that the widespread general opinion about this matter is false, but Mahmoûd Kâti seems to mumble strangely (may I be forgiven the word) about the subject (1), and one

1. See the note of Houdas-Delafosse, p. 333.

can, despite his authority and following the general opinion he rejects, admit the fact that it was Kotso who Islamized both Gao and the Songhay kingdom. We thus arrive at the year 1080 for his period, which gives his predecessors nine years on the average until the giant from Yemen. Moreover, there and now, we can indicate all our reservations about this far too recent beginning of the Songhay empire. The date one obtains from the Tarikh-es-Soudan (837 A. D.) seems preferable by far to the date of 961, obtained from the Tarikh-el-Fettach.

174 173 Regardless of how the matter stands concerning this last topic, we have then:

1.	Giant from Yemen	961
2.	Ouaaï	970
3.	Kaïen	979
4.	Takaï	988
5.	Mata-Kaï	997
6.	Mali Biyaï	1006
7.	Bayaï Kima	1015
8.	Beï	1024
9.	Kiraï	1033
10.	Yama Kalaouaï	1042

174 11.	Yama-Dombo	1051
173 12.	Yama-Diamaa	1060
13.	Diatakoré	1070
14.	Koto-Moslem	1080
15.	Kotso-Dariî	1093
16.	Hounabououa	1106
17.	Yama-Kitsi	1119
18.	Baraï'	1132
19.	Bibaï-Kaïna	1145
20.	Sémanbao	1158
21.	Fanda Diaoro	1171
22.	Yama-Daa	1184
23.	Arkour-Dioua	1197
24.	Baraï' (war with the Mossi)	1210
25.	Yassi Bo'o	1223 /23/
26.	Baro	1236
27.	Douro	1249
28.	Bitsi-Baro	1262
29.	Ali Golom	1275
30.	Silman Nari	1288
31.	Ibrahim Kabayao	1301
32.	Ousman Guifo	1311
33.	Mâkara Komsôu	1321-1322
34.	Boubakar	1335-1349
35.	Ankada	1349-1363
36.	Kimi-Yankoï'	1363-1377
37.	Baro del Yombo	1377-1390
38.	Madao	1390-1405
39.	Mohammed Koukiya	1405-1420
40.	Mohammed Fari	1420-1435
41.	Balam	1435-1450
42.	Souleïman-Dama	1450-1465
43.	Sonni-Ali-Ber	1465-1492

174 What is noticeable on this list (apart from the fact that this chronology brings the beginnings of the Songhaï' kingdom much too close to our time and that, on this point, the chronology drawn from the Tarikh-es-Soudan is preferable) is that Kotso-Moslem is placed

●174 here at about 1080, while the same king (called Kosoï, by Es'Sadi) is placed at about 1010 by the latter. On this point, the date of the Tarikh-el-Fettach seems preferable to us, for, if we think about the events of the eleventh century that might have brought about this conversion to Islam, we think, first of all, of the conquest of Ghana, at about 1076, by the Almoravide. We are, therefore, inclined to prefer the date drawn from the Tarikh-el-Fettach, without our reason being absolutely conclusive. For it is possible that either another cause besides the pressure of the Almoravide brought about the conversion to Islam by the Songhay king of that period, or even that that pressure made itself felt in the region at a period other than the precise time of the capture of Ghana. Yet it seems logical to think that it was this event which led the Songhaï' toward Islam, and, therefore, Kotso-Moslem, or Kosoï' the Mussulman, must be placed at about 1080, rather than at about 1010.

But there is yet a stronger contradiction than the above /24/ between the Tarikh-el-Fettach and the Tarikh-es-Soudan. The Tarikh-es-Soudan states explicitly that Kankan-Moussa was the first of the Mali kings to conquer Songhay. (1) From this the logical result is

1. Houdas translation, pp. 12, 13.

that Ali Kolon and his quest for liberation must be placed after Kankan-Moussa. According to the Tarikh-el-Fettach, Ali Kolon (called Ali Golom) did indeed free the Songhaï' or, more precisely, "abandoned king of the Malli for reasons too long to give here and which do not enter into our plan," the author calmly states. (2) But, after him,

2. Houdas and Delafosse translation, p. 334.

Silman-Nâri reigned, then Ibrahim-Kabayao, then Ousman-Guifo, then Mâkara-Komsoû, and it was in the latter's reign that Kankan-Moussa went into the Songhay country on a pilgrimage to Mecca. (3)

3. Ibid., p. 335.

We must thus acknowledge, according to this account, that Ali Golom or Ali Kolon precedes Kankan-Moussa, that he lived about the year

1275, and, if he freed the country from the Mali yoke, he did so under the direct successors of Soundiata, alias Mari-Diata. Then, at the time of Kankan-Moussa, the most famous of the Mali kings after Soundiata, the Songhaï country probably again fell under Mali suzerainty for an undeterminable length of time.

It is difficult to approach the question as to which is right, in that respect, the Tarikh-es-Soudan or the Tarikh-el-Fettach. Besides, for the question we are particularly interested in (the date of Baraï or Bir-Foloko), it is not essential to find a solution to it here. Let us simply point out that the chronology we took from the Tarikh-es-Soudan puts Bir-Foloko between 1215 and 1235, and the chronology of the Tarikh-el-Fettach puts him at about 1210. On the other hand, Binger places "Za-Birou or Bayarou Falaka" as corresponding to the reign of Mansa Wali I (1260-76) (4). Delafosse, in his study, (5) does not give the

4. Binger, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 368, 369.

5. Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, Vol. II, p. 65.

actual date for "Beïra-Foloko," but, according to the two outside dates he gives /25/ for the Dia in Gao (1010 to 1335), and considering the place of Beïra-Foloko between his predecessors and successors, he should be placed at about 1275-1300. In conclusion, I think that Baraï belongs to the first half of the thirteenth century and that the first war of the Songhaï and the Mossi took place at that time.

Here are the details given about this war in the Tarikh-el-Fettach (page 333): "Then /came/ the diaoua Baraï, against whom the king of the Mossi waged war. The campaign lasted four months, at the end of which time the king of the Mossi was beaten and his army routed and annihilated." The Mossi seem thus to have been the aggressors, but in the end they appear to have been beaten and pushed back.

The question now is to determine which king of the Mossi undertook this campaign, and, on this point, we must admit that we have no indication. We must naturally eliminate Nédéga, the king of Dagomba, his daughter Yennenga or Pokotoéga, and his grandson

●174 Ouidiraogo, but one might hesitate between Rawa and Ouemtanango. If one chose the former, he would then have lived from 1200 to 1250 (which would indicate that my date of 1293 for this naba is too recent, and that Delafosse's date, the beginning of the eleventh century, is too early). If one chose Ouemtanango, the same would still apply: my date of 1333 for this naba would be a century too recent, and Delafosse's date would be some fifty years too early (1). In conclusion,

> 1. Delafosse places Ouemtanango at about 1170. One can deduce this from two passages of his Vol. II, pp. 126 and 139. In the last passage, he speaks of Ouemtanango himself and, in the first, of his father and uncles.

it is impossible for us to say exactly which naba was the first to wage war against the north, but, whether it was Rawa or Ouemtanango, it seems clear that since the beginning of the thirteenth century the Mossi were settled in their present territories, including Yatenga, and, therefore, we must conclude that they came there during the twelfth century. My 1917 Mossi chronology would, therefore, need some revision, since it brings the origins of Mossi history too close to our time. On the other hand, Delafosse's chronology also would seem to need some correction, since it exaggerates in the opposite direction. It would not be the first time that the truth should be found, as often happens, between two extreme opinions. /26/

Chapter 3

Mossi and Bambara

174 114 We know that the Bambara king, N'Golo, and the Mossi king, Kango, waged war against each other toward the end of the eighteenth century. Yatenga traditions preserve in detail the memory, embellished with somewhat burlesque variations, of the events that precipitated this war (see my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/, 1917, pp. 88-91), but they say nothing of the war itself. Delafosse, in his

174 Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/ (1912), starts out by
114 relating, according to Bambara traditions, the same stories of the causes that brought about the war (1), but he does not say much about

1. Vol. II, pp. 143, 144.

the war itself. After speaking of Kango's cruel extermination of the Bambara auxiliaries whom he had formerly needed and who had been lent to him, Delafosse adds (2): "It took place about 1760: Ngolo

2. Page 144.

Diara, then emperor of Ségou, wanted to avenge his compatriots and waged war against Yatenga, but he was driven back by Kango. Later, following a kind of civil war that broke out in Ségou, the Dioula merchants of the town fled and took refuge in Yatenga. Ngolo asked Kango to send them back to him and, upon his refusal, led for the third time an expedition against the Ouahigouya empire. This expedition had no more success than the preceding one, and Ngolo died during it, followed in death shortly thereafter by his opponent (1787)."

Further on, Delafosse says (3): "Ngolo led two expeditions against /27/

3. Same work, Vol. II, pp. 289, 290 (chapter on the history of the Bambara of Ségou).

the Mossi of Yatenga, whose emperor, Kango, had cruelly put to death some Banmana /Bambara/ warriors, who had been previously put at his disposal by Denkoro or by Ton-Mansa. Driven back after his first expedition (about 1760), Ngolo later returned to Yatenga in order to get back from Kango some Dioula merchants who had fled Ségou following a kind of civil war and whom the Yatenga emperor refused to send home. It would seem that this second expedition was no more successful than the first; in any case, in the course of this campaign, Ngolo contracted a disease from which he died before he could return to his capital (1787)."

All this is very scanty, and we would know little more about it (1) were it not for a very curious passage by Mungo-Park, which no

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1. Monteil, in his recent book, Bambara de Ségou et du Kaarta /Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta/ (1924), says nothing about these wars. He only alludes to them in a short note on page 76.

one has yet pointed out to my knowledge and which tells us of a very important event in this war: the capture of the town of Dienné by Kango, a feat of arms worthy of the ancient Mossi conquerors, Rawa, Ouemtanango, Nassodoba, etc., which assured a conclusive victory of the Mossi naba over the Bambara fama.

174 I have copied the following passage word for word from Mungo-Park (translation by the Abbé of Voisin, 1800, Vol. II, pp. 45 and 46):

[114] "In the south of Jimbala is the Negro kingdom of Gotto (2) that

2. Djimbala (which in Mandé means country of the great water, from gui, "water," ba, "great," and la, a suffix indicating the country or region) is the region north of Lake Débo. As for "Gotto," a name that Mungo-Park gives here to all the countries of the southeast and south (Mossi, Kong, Bondoukou, etc.), it is undoubtedly the word "Gottogo," the Sudanese and Mandé name for Bondoukou, which is given in error to everything southeast and south of Djimbala or Guimbala.

is said to be very large. In the past, it was divided into a large number of small states, governed by different chiefs whose continual wars incited neighboring countries to invade the land. One of these chiefs, called Moossie, was politic and shrewd enough to get all the others to declare war on the king of Bambarra /sic/, and to have himself unanimously named generalissimo. /28/ From the shores of Lake Debbie (1), on the upper Niger, Moossie sent a large number of

1. This refers to Lake Débo.

boats filled with provisions toward Yenné; and with his entire army

174 he entered into Bambarra. The inhabitants of Yenné saw him on the opposite shore of the Niger (2) before they had been told of his march.

2. Djenné is not right on the Niger nor on the Bani, but at a certain distance between the two rivers.

His flotilla joined him that same day, and, after having unloaded his provisions, he crossed the river with one part of his army and took Yenné by assault during the night. This exploit so frightened the Bambarra king that he asked for peace. He agreed to pay the victor an annual tribute of a certain number of slaves and to give back to the Gotto inhabitants all that had been taken away from them. (3)

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3. This passage would indicate that the Dyoula of Gottogo (or Bondoukou), having some grievances against the Bambara of the Ségou region (assaulted peddlers, unpaid debts, etc.), went to the king of the Mossi to obtain justice, and that this might have been one of the causes of the war. There doubtless existed reciprocal grievances between Bambara and Mossi or between their natural allies.

Moussee /sic/ returned to Gotto in triumph, and he was proclaimed king. He gave his name to the capital."

As one can see, the important and valuable fact that must be extracted from this thick forest is the capture of Dienné by the king of the northern Mossi, the king of Yatenga (who at that time was Kango), during his struggles with the Bambara, that is, with Ngolo who was his contemporary. Because of his informants, who obviously did not 174 inform him with absolute precision and thus made him commit many 114 small errors or miscalculations, Mungo-Park embellished the true fact with imaginary details. First of all, there is the name of Kango, Moossie, Moussie /sic/, which is the name of the conqueror's country and not his own name. Then, the name of Gotto is given to the Mossi country, undoubtedly because of a confusion, either in the minds of the Blacks who informed Mungo-Park or in the mind of the great

174 traveler himself, between the people of Gotto who were mixed in this
114 affair and the Mossi of Yatenga who made the expedition. Finally, Naba Kango, although he brought great glory /29/ in the eighteenth century to the Mossi dynasty of Yatenga, obviously did not find, at the beginning of his reign, an absolute fragmentation of small countries which he would have gathered under single authority. He doubtless limited himself to restoring a kingdom that had formerly been powerful and centralized, and which he made so again through his personal prestige. In any case, he did not give his name to the Mossi (it is, on the contrary, the Mossi who, in Mungo-Park's description, give him his name), any more than to the capital which he indeed founded and which he called Ouahigouya. All these details are thus false or imaginary, but the principal fact remains and is very interesting. Mungo-Park arrived in Ségou just in time, in 1796, to
[153] record it before the weak memories of the Mossi and Bambara Negroes would have condemned it to hopeless oblivion. /30/

Chapter 4

The Cult of the Sun Among the Mossi

794 Do the Mossi adore the sun? And is their great god Ouendé partly or wholly a sun god?

Binger was the first to state that the Mossi adored the sun. "They are fetishists," he says (1), "but they have a cult of the sun, which

1. Du Niger au golfe de Guinée
/From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea/,
Vol. I, p. 492.

still today bears the same name as God; they call it Wouidi."

In turn, Lieutenant Desplagnes, in his Plateau Central Nigérien /Central Nigerian Plateau/ (pp. 275, 276) said in 1907:

"The Hougho-Ouango of Mossi (these priests live in Mossi in the villages of Boujema, Mani, Kondogho, Yolo, Tio) make sacrifices to the sun in order to bind it to the earth, morning and evening, at

4: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1957
FA28 Mossi FA28

The village chiefs held their fiefs directly from the district chiefs, and were enfeoffed through the principle of primogeniture on the advice of district chiefs' ministers. They paid homage, and owed fealty, to their district chiefs, although part of their tribute always was sent to the Moro-naba. In the event of war they followed their district chief when he went to serve the Moro-naba. The village chiefs received presents from the heads of the families in the village and settled any local court cases in their villages. They did not have the right, however, either to put men into stocks or to have them executed. They were aided in the administration of the villages by the heads of families.

Almost every Mossi village had sections in which the nobles lived. As stated above, these people were the relatives or descendants of the district heads, and they lived in a semiparasitic condition upon the commoners in the village. Most of them owned horses and, in addition to furnishing the cavalry for the district chief's contingent during war, they raided and attacked caravans passing through the country. The nobles were subject to the control of the village chiefs, and it was not unusual for them to be under the jurisdiction of chiefs who were members of the commoner class. In such cases the district chiefs had a great deal of difficulty resolving the problems between their vassals and their kinsmen. The nobles could steal the wives and daughters of the commoners, but if a commoner tried to steal the wife of a noble he and the woman were both killed. Whenever a noble threatened to disrupt the life of a district he was secretly strangled by the district chief's men.

The above is a brief account of the origin and structure of the Mossi political system. Most of the myths regarding the origin of this system seem to suggest that here is a classic conquest state, but one neither founded by Caucasians nor extraordinarily influenced by them. The Mossi state is homogeneous in race, language, and culture, a feature not found in most of the other Sudanic states. This fact is not interesting in itself until we note that the Mossi share many cultural traits with the Voltaic peoples. Marc believes that this cultural homogeneity is the result of the Mossi invasion of the area during which they imposed their languages and customs on the indigenous populations. Apparently not believing the traditions about the Dagomba origin of the Mossi, he explains the fact that such non-Mossi groups as the Nankana, Wala, and Dagari speak Mossi dialects as proof that the Mossi were politically more powerful in ancient times, but "the feudal regime disappeared little by little.... The Mossi language was kept; [it is] the only actual witness of the ancient power of the Mossi" (author's translation).[5] We know, however, that the Mossi were still encroaching on the territories of their neighbors when the French arrived in 1896.[6]

Rattray believes that the inhabitants of Mamprussi, Dagomba, and Mossi territories are the same now as they were "centuries before the ancestors of those who are now their rulers appeared on the scene."[7] He states that

4: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1957
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these conquerors even adopted the language and culture of the indigenous populations, but introduced an "administrative machinery" that welded scattered local groups into loose confederacies without affecting in any great degree the inner life of these groups.[8] Rattray's hypothesis appears to explain quite adequately the reasons for the cultural homogeneity of the Mossi and the other Voltaic peoples. It also conforms to what we know from recent historical times of the organizing and conquering abilities of such figures as Samory and El Hadj Omar. These men carved out veritable empires in this area in remarkably short periods. However, we need not accept Rattray's hypothesis that foreigners were the ones who instituted "administrative machinery" among the Mossi. It is highly possible that the Mossi state might have been the result of internal Voltaic development when one Dagomba lineage established its hegemony over scattered local people in this area. There is some evidence here that the Mossi state had many of the features of the widespread Negro pattern of political structure so common to the other Sudanic states, and this fits in very well with what Professor Greenberg reports about the basic African nature of these states.[9]

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It is clear that the Mossi state was a complex entity and many persons cannot describe it without calling it feudal.[10] However, the question of feudalism itself is a vexing one, and many scholars limit the use of this term to describe the political system of medieval France and possibly Japan. In fact, not many people would admit the presence of feudal states in Africa although some, such as S. F. Nadel, who worked among the Nupe, call the Sudanic states feudal and talk about fiefs and vassalage. It is now generally agreed that feudalism, despite its other aspects, is basically a form of government. Stephenson gives the classic features of a feudal state as: (1) fief-holding with vassalage; (2) homage and fealty; (3) mutual obligations between lords and vassals; (4) military service from the vassals; (5) inheritance of fiefs by heirs of vassals, usually by primogeniture; (6) subinfeudation; (7) attendance at court; and (8) wardship and marriage arrangements by which fiefs could be held in trust for minors and, in the case of female heirs, husbands who can render homage for them.[11]

An examination of the Mossi political system in terms of the first six characteristics of feudalism shows that this system conforms very well to the specifications for a feudal system. The Mossi did not have an elaborate court structure on the European model and, since only mature males could inherit fiefs, no arrangements for wardships and marriages were necessary. Furthermore, I do not think that these two traits are necessary for feudalism, and they can be considered as cultural content that need not be present in all social processes with similar functions.

Mossi-like societies present a special problem to political theorists because of the importance of kinship in their political systems. Coulborn[12] strongly insists that "A feudal society... is based on contract. It is not

173 "The Mossi say that at the time of their arrival the land was occupied by savages who went naked and bore tattooings on their bellies. Those natives were named Suida. The Mossi claim that they chased the Habé into the mountains of Bandiagara and that the Habé, Kipirsi, and Boussangçé are the survivors of this autochtonous Suida group . . . .

"The traditions of the primitive groups driven off by the invaders agree rather closely with Mossi traditions. . . .

174 "In view of these traditions, it seems to us[1] that the Mossi, coming from far to the east, occupied those lands which are now Mampoursi /Mamprusi/ and Dagomba territories, with Gambaga as their capital, and then, from Gambaga, set out for the northwest and came to settle in the vast plains of the White Volta basin, where they still live. At the time of their arrival, the present Mossi country was inhabited by tribes which are now represented by the Boussangçé, the Gourounsi, and the Habé.

"It is probable that the Mossi owed part of their success to their cavalry. We believe that the Mossi were responsible for introducing the types of horses found at the present day in the Volta basin. Even today, all the Mossi love horses and are proud to own them, and no naba would deign to appear in public except on horseback. The Gourounsi, on the other hand, care little for horses. . . .

"Only part of the autochtonous inhabitants took refuge in the mountains or beyond the Red Volta. The remaining group was conquered and incorporated into the Mossi group, and adopted the Mossi language and customs /454/. This autochtonous population did not vanish without traces. In our opinion, it is to be credited with the religious organization of the Mossi." (Pages 130 to 134.)

173 Moulins, on the other hand, an official in charge of native affairs who lived among the Mossi from 1907 to 1909 and who wrote the Monographie /Monograph/ of the Ouagadougou circle in 1909, tells the story as follows:

"Tradition has it that some thirty-five generations ago, the king of Dagomba who lived in Gambakha had a daughter named Poko whom he allowed to grow in years and in beauty without attempting to find her a husband. This made the young girl so angry that she did not hesitate to run away from her paternal home on a horse she had found.

[1] [These passages are quoted from "Le Pays Mossi" of Lt. Marc, see p 2 —Analyst.]

173 "This does not mean that nothing remained to be done by Oubry's successors. The land had been conquered, but remained to be explored and incorporated. The political organization had been outlined, but remained to be strengthened and completed.

"Up to the reign of Naba Kobra, fourteenth successor of Oubry, the Moro Nabas settled successively at various points of the empire instead of living generation after generation at Ouagadougou as they have done ever since. It would seem that in so doing they were attempting to strengthen their authority in regions where it was as yet insufficiently acknowledged.

"Whenever a territorial command became vacant, on the other hand, the Moro Nabas systematically filled it with a member of their own family. As a result, the whole land was soon in the hands of individuals who were united by bonds /457/ of kinship and who acknowledged the Moro Naba as the head of their family.

"Finally, thanks to marriages between Mossi, Nymsi, and Gourounsi individuals, the conquering element fused slowly with the initial population and eventually absorbed it almost completely.

174 "We have already seen that at the time of the Dagomba invasion the territory that makes up the present district of Tenkodogo was inhabited by a Boussansé population, while the area covered by the present district of Ouagadougou was settled by Gourounsi and Nymsi or Nioniossé.

"The mixture of Dagomba with Boussansé, Nymsi and Gourounsi resulted in the Mossi element, which soon became the most important part of the population. As conquerors, indeed, the Dagomba married several women each, and the prohibitions governing kin marriages led them to seek their wives among the Boussansé, Nioniossé, and Gourounsi families. This is how they soon came to absorb the Autochtonous element, or at least the element that was already established in the area when they arrived.

"A few Nymsi families among the Mossi have avoided all intermixture, but their continuous contact with the Mossi has led them to adopt the latter's language and customs, and from a political standpoint there is no difference between the two groups."

174 From the two accounts of Marc and Moulins, the following broad facts may be gathered:

1. The Mossi, coming from the northwest, conquered the Dagomba at a time which is difficult to determine exactly, but which must not have long antedated their conquest of Mossi territory.

[Passages quoted from the "Monograph of the Ouagadougou circle in 1909" by Moulins.—Analyst.]

174 2. They set out from Dagomba to conquer the present Mossi territory, beginning with Tenkodogo and ending with Ouahigouya, that is, proceeding from southeast to northwest. Moulins' account is preferable to Marc's, as concerns the details of this conquest, for the items are better documented, more credible, and more accurate (for example, /458/ Marc says that Ouidiraogo was the daughter of the king of Dagomba. Yet Ouidiraogo means "male horse" in Mossi, and consequently could not be a girl's name, while Poko is a female name common among the Mossi, and in fact simply means "woman." Likewise, if Marc's account were to be taken literally Zougourana would be a Boussansé, while he is a Mossi, father of Oubry the conqueror, etc.).

3. They found there an autochtonous group closely related to the Kipirsi, Gourounsi, Habé, and Boussansé of today, and they mixed with it. From previous study we are already familiar with the Gourounsi, who are communal cultivators. The Kipirsi, Boussansé, and Habé are of similar social type. It was the conquering Mossi who injected into the resulting mixture a superior, decommunalizing element.

Something must now be added to Moulins' account. He seems to believe that the Mossi reached their greatest conquering expansion in Oubry's reign, and that once they had seized the present Mossi territory, from the time of Oubry onward, they concerned themselves merely with the administration and consolidation of the lands they had conquered. This, however, does not agree with the account of the Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of the Sudan/ from which Marc borrowed so fruitfully.

The Tarikh tells us that the Mossi seized Timbuktu in the fourteenth century, and Marc, very logically it seems sets the seizure of Timbuktu around 1333 or 1334 (for a discussion of this topic see pages 136-138 of his book, mentioned above). In 1336 or 1337, however, Mali forces re-occupied Timbuktu. The Mossi, therefore, reached much farther north than Moulins indicates right from their first conquering thrust. The reign of Oubry, conqueror of Ouagadougou, may be set in the twelfth century A.D. His successors continued the drive toward the northwest. They occupied Ouahigouya, drove back the Habé just beyond the village, and pushed on toward the river /Niger/ to attack Timbuktu for the first time in 1333 or 1334. They seized the town, but Mansa Sliman,

174 chief of the Mali empire, recaptured it a few years later.

/459/ Mossi expansion toward the south may no doubt be set at that time. This expansion is a fact. We have already verified, in mentioning the Dagari, that an important Mossi group came and settled in Dagari country, fusing with the autochtonous inhabitants and forming the present-day Dagari who speak a language derived from Mossi and very closely related to it. The Dagari live in the extreme south of the Leo district and in the north of the British Gold Coast. In other words they are settled, as we already know, on the tenth and eleventh parallels.

Marc, incidentally, acknowledges the fact that the Mossi went as far as the ninth degree south. "In the east," he says on page 138, "they occupied all of Gourma /Gurma/ territory and, to the southeast of Dori, Yaga territory. To the south, in the valley of the White Volta, they pushed on to the ninth parallel, and in the valley of the Black Volta they reached the tenth parallel near Oua. These southern boundaries are roughly the extreme frontiers which may be reached on horseback, and since the Mossi, as we have already mentioned, are basically horsemen, it is probable that they did not attempt to come any closer to the great forest."

Marc sets the conquering Mossi thrust toward the east (Gourma, Yanga, etc.) and toward the south (Nounouma /Nunuma/, Sissala /Isala/, Dagari, Kassouna /Kasena/, Boura /Builsa/, etc.) in the fifteenth century. I myself would rather place it in the second half of the fourteenth century, for at the time when the Mossi seized Timbuktu (1333 or 1334) they were certainly propelled by a powerful drive of conquest and expansion. Yet we know that Mansa Sliman, sultan of the Mali empire, recaptured Timbuktu a few years later. This of course could not be done without pushing back the Mossi toward the southeast, toward Ouahigouya or Ouagadougou, but it is most likely that this temporary setback did not stem their expanding drive. Rather, it would be logical and consistent with the broad trends of history to assume that it was merely deflected in another direction. It was no doubt shortly after the recapture of Timbuktu by the Mandé, therefore, that the Mossi turned south and pushed on as conquerors to Oua. It is probable that the whole second half of the fourteenth century, as well as the first few years of the fifteenth, were given to this task.

• 174 /460/ This Mossi expansion toward the south served, incidentally, to swell the forces of the empire. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find the Mossi heading north again at a later time. The Tarikh-es-Soudan relates that in 1432 and 1480 they led victorious expeditions against Timbuktu and successfully attacked the Macina.

In my opinion, it was at that time, toward the middle of the fifteenth century, that the Mossi empire reached its zenith. It ruled over the whole bend of the Niger, from Oua and Gambakha /sic/ in the south to near Timbuktu in the north, and roughly from the eastern to the western Niger /River/.

This position of dominance, however, was soon to be lost. In 1483, the Mossi invaded territories which the founder of the second Songhay empire had just won from the Mali empire. The forces of the latter advanced on the Mossi, inflicted upon them a bloody defeat, and pursued them right into their own territory.

In 1497, Askia El-Hadj-Mohammed unleashed the holy war against the Mossi. In 1549 and 1561, Askia Daoud made brilliant forays into Mossi territory. In short, the second Songhay empire took the upper hand, checked Mossi attacks to the north, and went so far as to pursue them into their own lands. It was at that time, no doubt, that the Mossi were forced to abandon permanently those territories located beyond Ouahigouya, both to the northwest and to the north. It was probably at that time also that the Mossi wave which had advanced toward the south drew back within its present boundaries, abandoning the Dagari and Gourounsi lands, etc., although not without leaving some traces.

In 1591, a Moroccan detachment brought the second Songhay empire to an end and captured Timbuktu. Now the Mossi had nothing to fear from the north, since their great enemy, the Songhay empire, had been destroyed, while the Moroccan empire of Timbuktu was soon to decay. Nevertheless, the Mossi had suffered too many reverses in the sixteenth century to recover from the blows inflicted by the Songhay, and they too were well on their way to decadence. It was at that time, no doubt, that the Ouahigouya Mossi broke all the bonds that tied them to Ouagadougou. /461/ The Gourma region probably did the same. In short, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Mossi empire shrank to the dimensions it possessed when we conquered it in 1896.

174 It must be said, however, as Marc points out, that the Mossi empire enjoyed a peaceful old age in the nineteenth century. The Toucouleur /Tukulor/ who conquered the Haoussa /Hausa/ territory with Othman /Usuman/ dan Fodio did not touch Mossi lands, and neither did El-Hadj-Omar who was detained in Macina territory by the Foulah /Fulani/. Toward the south, Samory went no farther than Boromo after conquering the Sudanese Ivory Coast. As for the forces of Djerma or Zaberma /Zerma/, they suffered a defeat in Kipirsi lands after their conquest of Gourounsi territories, that checked temporarily their march toward the north. They might later have nibbled at Mossi lands, but the French arrived precisely at that time. In short, the Mossi empire remained intact throughout the nineteenth century, though none the stronger for it, and crumbled at one blow in 1896 at the hand of a small French detachment.

173 174 We must add to this brief historical outline a list of the Moro Nabas who have succeeded one another since the time of Oubry. This list was borrowed from Moulins' Monographie du cercle de Ouagadougou /Monograph of the Ouagadougou Circle/.

1. Oubry, son of Zoungourana, grandson of Ouidiraogo, great-grandson of Poko. He lived at Oubrytenga.
2. Sorba, son of Oubry, who lived at Lougousi.
3. Nassekiemdé, brother of Sorba.
4. Nassébiri, brother of Sorba. He lived at La.
5. Ningnom, brother of the preceding.
6. Koundoumié, son of the preceding. He lived at Tiou.
7. Kouda, son of the preceding. He lived at Saponé.
8. Dawoéma, son of the preceding. He lived at Loumbila.
9. Zettembousma, brother of the preceding.
10. Nandieffo, son of the preceding. He lived at Ouagadougou.

If the reign of Naba Oubry is set around 1175 A.D., a period of 721 years is obtained up to the time of Bokary Koutou, thirtieth Moro Naba, who ruled in 1896. This yields an average reign of 24 years for each Moro Naba. If these figures are applied to the first ten Moro Nabas, it means that Kida would have reigned from 1463 /462/ to 1487. He would have been the one to invade the second Songhay empire in 1483 and to be driven back by Sonni-Ali.

173 11. Nattia, son of the preceding. He lived at Dazouli.
174 12. Namoëro, son of the preceding.
13. Kida, brother of Nattia. He lived at Ouagadougou.
14. Kimba, brother of the preceding. He lived at the same place.
15. Kobra, son of the preceding. He lived at Uougandé.
16. Sana, son of the preceding. He lived at Ouagadougou, where all his successors resided up to the present day.
17. Guiliga, son of the preceding.
18. Oubia, brother of the preceding.
19. Mottaba, son of the preceding.
20. Ouarga, brother of the preceding.
21. Zombéré, son of the preceding.
22. Kom, son of the preceding.
23. Sagha, son of the preceding.
24. Koulougou, son of the preceding.
25. Savadoro, son of the preceding.
26. Karfo, son of Savadoro.
27. Baoro, brother of Savadoro.
28. Koutou, son of the preceding.
29. Sanom, son of Koutou.
30. Boukary /sic/ Koutou, son of Koutou.

It was Bokary Koutou who was dethroned by Lt. Voulet in 1896.

31. Kouka (Siguiri) with whom Lt. Voulet signed a treaty whereby Mossi territory was placed under the suzerainty of France
32. Kom, the present Moro Naba (1910).

648 As may be seen, therefore, the Moro Nabas continue to exist among the Mossi. France even provides them with a pension, which first amounted to 25,000 francs a year and has since been lowered to 18,000 francs. They no longer hold any powers, however, and they do nothing whatever.

175 I have found in the Monographie of the circle some interesting data on expeditions led by the Moro Nabas into Kipirsi territory, which always resisted Mossi conquest. Naba Koundoumié, sixth successor of Oubry, /463/ first led a bloody expedition to Kayao and Tiou. Naba Dawoéma, eighth successor of Oubry, waged war to the north of Yako. Naba Ouarga, twentieth successor of Oubry, settled

175 at La and waged a series of battles in the Yako region. Naba Koutou, twenty-eighth successor of Oubry, fought in the Sourgou region (Kipirsi). And finally, during the last few years preceding our occupation, Naba Sanom and Bokary Koutou attacked the village of Lallé.

643 631 According to Moulins' data, it was Naba Koundoumié, sixth successor of Oubry, who set three of his sons as heads of the Boussouma, Béloussa and Yako provinces. He made them veritable monarchs who were united to the Moro Naba by a mere bond of vassalage, as was already the case with the chief of Tenkodogo.

Moulins adds, "As a rule, the chiefs of vassal provinces do not seem to have given much thought to enfranchisement from the Moro Naba's suzerainty, which actually did not weigh heavily upon them. We must come all the way to modern times, to Sanom's reign, to find signs of a struggle between the sovereign and the chiefs of Boussouma and Béloussa.

"On the other hand, the important vassals sometimes resorted to the Moro Naba's support to strengthen their authority within their own provinces. We have just mentioned the expeditions directed against Yako. Tradition has also preserved the memory of a series of battles waged by Dawoéma, eighth successor of Oubry, against the Boussansé of Garango who attempted to free themselves from Tenkodogo Naba."

● 174 Following this brief glance at the history of the Mossi empire, there remain, or should remain, three questions to investigate.

1. The remote origins of the Mossi proper, the conquering Mossi who came from Dagomba to Tenkodogo and then to Ouagadougou. At the present day, however, these origins are unknown. They might be uncovered by studying the Mossi language and comparing it systematically with the ancient or present tongues of north, east, and west Africa. I do not believe that such a piece of research is forthcoming, however. /464/ The Mossi might also be studied from the standpoint of physical anthropology, in which case two distinct studies ought to be made, one of the chiefs and nobles, another of the bulk of the Mossi population. The results would then be compared with those obtained for other populations of north and west Africa. Like the one previously mentioned, however, this would be a tremendous project which is not likely to be undertaken in the near future.

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In connection with this problem, I shall enumerate below the digits from one to ten in Mossi, in closely related languages (Dagomba, Nankana /Nankanse/), and in derivative tongues (Dagari, Boura, Gourma).

	Mossi	Dagomba	Nankana	Dagari	Boura	Gourma
Un . .	Yẽmeri	N'Dan	Yendé	Yen	Gni	Iendi
Deux .	Yibou	Niyi	Yi	Ayi	Niyé	Lié
Trois .	Tabo	Nta	Ntan	Ata	Ngata	Ita
Quatre	Nasé	Nahé	Anasé	Ana	Anasi	Ina
Cinq .	Nou	Anou	Anou	Anou	Nganou	Imou
Six . .	Ayobé	Ayobo	Ayobé	Ayobe	Vendenta	Ilouoba
Sept .	Yopoĩ	Ayopoué	Ayopoué	Ayopoué	Nantanasé	Illélé
Huit .	Ani	Ani	Ani	Ani	Nané (ou Nani)	Ni
Neuf .	Aoué	Aoué	Aoué	Voué	Noo	Ia
Dix . .	Piga	Pia	Pia	Pié	Pi	Piga

174 2. The second question is a priori less difficult to solve. It concerns the time when the Yarsé or Ouangarbé settled in Mossi territory.

Marc and Moulins do not agree on this score.

Speaking of Mossi territory, Marc says (op. cit., p. 142), "It was most probably its reputation as a peaceful land that lured the Mandé-Dioula /Diula/ or present-day Yarsé about the middle of the eighteenth century. According to the native traditions summarized by Binger, some Mandé-Dioula who were established in Ségou and who had taken a stand against N'Golo, victor over Sogoné, fled in fear of retaliation after the death of Sogoné in 1754 and came to settle among the Mossi. N'Golo attempted to pursue them, and twice came and attacked the Mossi. Both expeditions failed, and N'Golo died in the course of the second one in 1787."

/465/ According to Marc, the Yarsé would thus be Mandé-Dyoula /sic/ from Ségou who settled in Mossi territory in the eighteenth century. Moulins has quite a different idea.

174 "The Yarsé or Ouangarbé," he says in the Monographie of the Ouagadougou circle, "entered the territory during the reign of Koundoumié, sixth Moro Naba.

"At that time, as tradition has it, seven Mandé traders named respectively Bolle, Rambéré, Séré, Pallom, Morebanom, Parirabo, and Mari Konda, were traveling through Mossi territory with their merchandise. They called upon the Moro Naba, and the latter, impressed by their intelligence, conceived the thought of keeping those superior individuals in his own employ. He plied them with gifts, offered them wives, and installed them nearby in a quarter that was given the name of Zoroné. According to this account, the descendants of these men gave rise to the various Yarsé communities which are found today throughout the circle."

According to Moulins, therefore, the Yarsé would have entered Mossi territory toward the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth, since Naba Koundoumié's time may be set around 1300. I believe that this opinion is more accurate than Marc's, in view of the fact that the Yarsé no longer know the Mandé language and speak only Mossi. It would be surprising if these Mandé had come to forget their mother tongue within a century and a half, although this might occur in five centuries. Nevertheless, one detail disturbs me in the Moulins version: the seven Mandé traders bear Mossi names, Bolle, Rambéré, Pallom, etc., instead of Mandé names as would be natural. No matter what the truth may be, it is more probable that the Yarsé settled in Mossi territory during the thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D. than in the eighteenth century.

174 563 3. The same problem of a date of settlement applies to the Foulbé /Fulani/, and there again Marc and Moulins are in complete disagreement.

"The Peul probably came to Mossi territory in the footsteps of the Mandé-Dioula," says Marc, page 143. Moulins has a different opinion. /466/ "The Peuhl, he says, "must have settled in the Mossi area at a very remote time. It even seems that they had long been there at the time of the Dagomba invasion." This would take us beyond the twelfth century A.D. In any case, it is probable that the Foulbé were established in Mossi territory in small groups, as they are still today, well before the eighteenth century.

593 672 to guard against dangers resulting from the obligation to make reparation for injuries committed by one of its members. This has led naturally to a recognition of the family's right, in the person of its head, to take whatever measures are necessary for the preservation of its common interests. Prior to our occupation, such measures could go as far as putting in irons or even putting to death an individual who called upon the collective responsibility of the family too frequently or too onerously, and thus threatened to endanger its equilibrium. The decision of a family head involving the [443] death sentence or putting in irons for life for one of his people, however, only became final with the naba's approval. The latter could oppose it by assuming financial responsibility, in the family's stead, for all future misdemeanors committed by the person he had pardoned."

593 174 We come now to an interesting although extremely ticklish subject, namely, the causes of the partial decommunalization of the Mossi family.

If we look at the present workaday life of these people, their decommunalization seems inexplicable in view of the fact that we are dealing with a group of cultivators, somewhat indolent to be sure, but nevertheless cultivators first and foremost. The Mossi, on the other hand, are not herdsmen. They are very mediocre stock-breeders. Among them as among other Blacks of West Africa, hunting merely accounts for a small percentage of their total food-producing activities. They are not traders, either. We see nothing here, therefore, that might explain the decommunalization of the family, and we must refer back to the previous workaday life of this people. We saw earlier, however, that while the present Mossi population originated /554/ from the fusion of two disparate elements, one of those elements was similar to the Bobo, Gourounsi, Habé, Kipirsi, etc., and thus deeply communal and patriarchal. It is obviously not from this element that the present decommunalization might stem.

Fortunately, there exists another and very different element. The Mossi who came from the Dagomba were, as we know, Blacks who were 1) warriors and conquerors, 2) breeders of horses, no doubt,

593 and very probably of large and small livestock as well. In this
174 respect they must have been strikingly similar to the present-day Toucouleur, who conquered part of West Africa in the nineteenth century and who are, like the Foulah of Guinea, half stockbreeders, half cultivators. (We shall review briefly those very Toucouleur in Chapter 4 of this book, to give the reader an idea of the Black conqueror on the active rather than the potential level, in a "pure state" rather than already fused into a heterogeneous conquered population /not translated/). Now war with its attendant loot, like stockbreeding, augments private property and allows individuals and households to secede from the family, at least to the extent permitted by the problems of cultivation and especially of field clearing. It is a fact that among the Toucouleur and Foulah, as among the Dagomba and Mossi, every household lives separately and works separately (except for that most difficult of all tasks to the Blacks, the clearing of fields). Thus, it must be concluded that the decommunalization of the present-day Mossi family derives from the ancient workaday life of the conquering segment of the population, which imposed its own customs on the conquered group. This workaday life consisted half of stockbreeding, half of cultivation as among the present-day Toucouleur and Foulah, with war and looting in addition as among the same groups up to quite recently.

Of course, we learn nothing that might shed light on the subject by questioning the Mossi themselves. My informants, for example, tell me that the various soukala in a family actually constitute but one family. I ask them why, then, do they not live together and do all their tilling together, like /555/ the Bobo, Gourounsi, Bambara, etc.? Because the women quarrel, they tell me. Those quarrels caused other fights among the men, and people ended up living separately. Of course, this could only have been a pretext for secession, and the true cause which made this secession possible, namely, the increasing individual wealth of the households, was something else again.

592 We shall close with a few details concerning the internal structure of the Mossi household. The latter includes, as we have stated above, the following members:

535 while the ouango are singing will surely die within the year. (The
532 ouango sing at the funeral ceremonies of important personages, at the
575 second ceremony performed a month or a year after the burial).
The masks of the ouango are made in the greatest secrecy. They have to be carved out of a single piece of wood, and the man who is making one must not be seen as long as his task has not been completed.

535 "In our opinion it would be most interesting to try and study
575 the ouango and their customs more closely than we succeeded in
171 doing. We believe, indeed, that theirs is a very old institution
● 174 antedating the arrival of the Mossi in the Volta basin, an institution which they found among the peoples they conquered and which they preserved, no doubt because they did not dare fight it. Ouango are to be found throughout Gourounsi territory, and the dou noticed by Binger among the Bobo would seem to have the same origin. The dancers with totemic masks who appear in some of Desplagnes' photographs are quite similar to the Mossi ouango."

The Mossi ouango are thus no different from the Bobo dou, the Khassonké mamadiombo, the Habé and Bambara namakoro, the Malinké dokho, the Landouman /Landuma/ simo, etc.

773 The Earth chief or Tensoba is also part of the Mossi priestly
174 organization. We are already familiar with Earth chiefs, whom we encountered among the Gourounsi. They exercise no political authority in the village, but they are entrusted with the performance of sacrifices to the Earth and to other local divinities.

The presence of those Earth chiefs among the Mossi is no doubt to be explained by the superposition of the conquering group over the conquered group. When the Mossi invaded and conquered the country, they placed their own men at the head of all the villages and all the cantons in the course of conquest, /595/ to ensure the submission of the vanquished population. They never felt, however, (and they hold this in common with the rest of West Africa) that they were themselves qualified to offer sacrifices to the Earth and other divinities of the place. Only the vanquished, former owners of the latter and on good terms with it, were qualified to do this. The former autochtonous political chief thus naturally became a religious chief under Mossi authority. We have already seen that the Moro Naba

793 never offers sacrifices himself to the Earth at Ouagadougou, nor does
●174 he have them offered by the Gandé Naba, his minister of religion. He entrusts with this task the Ouagadougou Naba, who is a grandson of the autochtonous inhabitants and thus favorably regarded by the local divinities. Similarly, when the Moro Naba sacrifices to the hillocks surrounding Ouagadougou, he entrusts the local chief with the offerings and the physical sacrifice. Now, what the Moro Naba still does at Ouagadougou was no doubt done by other Mossi chiefs throughout the land after conquest, once the submission of the autochtonous inhabitants had been ensured by force of arms. Hence, the institution of the Tensoba.

One might object that Earth chiefs are also to be found in Gourounsi territory, although the Gourounsi are independent. We know, however, that the present-day Gourounsi cantons were not the achievement of the Gourounsi themselves but of minor Mossi dynasties established in the territory. Under the circumstances, the same substitution of conquering chiefs for conquered chiefs has occurred there as in Mossi territory, with the same consequences.

793 "The Tensoba," says Marc, p. 157, "whose title means 'Master of the Earth,' stands in opposition to the naba who is a military chief....

"The Tensoba is the indispensable mediator between the ancestors and their living descendants. It is he who conducts the funeral ceremonies and who decides on the honors to be rendered on the Day of the Dead. It is to him that one appeals in case of an epidemic or any public misfortune, since misfortunes are always due to the evil inclinations of ancestors that must be allayed."

793 /596/ Actually, the institution of the Earth chief does not strip
643 the village and canton chiefs of all religious powers. In some areas,
839 as Marc pointed out, the Earth chiefs have gradually vanished, and
778 the political chiefs have become religious chiefs as well. They per-
[43] form sacrifices on the bara's advice, without failing to make a gift of some sort (100 or 1,000 cowries) to the latter also. By the same token and up to a point, the Moro Naba is invested with a religious character and with religious attributes. It is he, as we have already seen, who orders the performance of sacrifices to the Earth, to the hills. Every year during the dry season, he has a donkey sacrificed to Naba Koutou, a former Moro Naba, in the hut where the latter is buried. Prior to our occupation it was a eunuch who performed

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[p. 1]

I

INTRODUCTION

DESPITE THE GROWING interest in Africa over the last decade, scholars still know very little about the medieval societies that once flourished in the western Sudan. With few exceptions, these societies declined or disappeared long before they had been adequately described. Today, historians are poring over Arabic documents and local chronicles dealing with the ancient kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, Songhai, Bornu, Kanem, the Mossi, and the Hausa in an attempt to unravel the origins, evolution, and nature of these societies. Had more archeological investigations been conducted in the area, the task would be easier. Unfortunately, the generalization still holds that for every ton of archeological materials sifted in Egypt and parts of the Middle East, only one teaspoonful has been examined in the western Sudan.

The second source of clues about early Sudanese societies is the work of ethnologists. However, most of the societies mentioned by early chroniclers have changed radically. Of course, many traits still survive, but they often occur within different institutional structures. One of the few societies that appears to have maintained much of its ancient structure is the Mossi. The Mossi were in contact with the now nonexistent Mali and Songhai kingdoms, and they survived the rise and fall of such Sudanese conquerors as El Hadj Omar and Samory Touré. Their remarkable society retained its structure throughout French rule. Only on the eve of independence did the Mossi traditional political organization collapse.

It would be tempting to claim, as many scholars have done, that the governmental system of the Mossi mirrored faithfully that of the early Sudanese kingdoms.[1] As will be noted below, Mossi society, especially in the kingdom of Ouagadougou, did possess in detail many of the political institutions described for ancient Mali. Yet one cannot extrapolate from the contemporary scene to the early Sudan, for Mossi society undoubtedly changed over the centuries. It is my hope, however, that this study of Mossi government will contribute to the understanding of the development, structure, and

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functioning of early Sudanese societies. It will also attempt to demonstrate how European conquest affected the political organization of the Mossi and contributed to its ultimate decline.

The kingdom of Ouagadougou was selected as the main object of study, primarily because it emerged as the most important Mossi polity and retained this position through the greater part of Mossi history. Attention will be given to the other Mossi polities and the three other Mossi kingdoms—Yatenga, Tenkodogo, and the more remote Fada-N'Gourma, all of which resemble Ouagadougou—only insofar as they affect the history of Ouagadougou or highlight the basic nature of Mossi government.

The Mossi are a Sudanese Negroid population in the new Republic of the Upper Volta.[2] They number about 2,200,000, or approximately half of the country's total population. Their ancestral territory, which they call *Mogho* (land of the Mossi), covers some 30,000 square miles in the southern part of the Republic. It is a huge plateau, lying from 1,000 to 1,600 feet above sea level, and broken by three low mountain ranges and numerous small hills. The Kipirsi range in the northeast has an average height of about 2,000 feet and includes the sacred mountain of the Mossi, known as Plimpikou. The Boussouma range to the east reaches a height of some 1,500 feet, and the Naouri range in the southeast is almost as high.

The climate of Mossi country is typical of the Sudanic zone. There are two main seasons, one cold and dry, the other hot and wet. The first begins in November with the coming of the harmattan and ends in January, the coolest month, when the average temperature is about 70° F. and the humidity about 12 per cent. The hot season extends from March to October. In July, the warmest month, the temperature reaches a high of 88° F. and the humidity 78 per cent. Violent dust storms herald the rains, which begin late in May and end in September. The rain falls almost entirely in heavy showers and thunderstorms, and the average annual fall is between 30 and 40 inches. In those years when the rainfall is about 40 inches and is regularly spaced, the Mossi can look forward to a good harvest. When the rainfall is below 30 inches and is spaced irregularly during the planting season, the threat of famine is serious. So narrow is the margin of rainfall for agriculture that in 1956 the people of one Mossi district anxiously awaited "two rains" (two showers), without which they feared that in 1957 there would be a difficult "hungry period" (the time between the exhaustion of one year's crops and the maturing of the next).

Mossi country is drained by only three rivers: the Black Volta with its two chief tributaries, the Sourou and the Debere, and the Red and White Voltas with their numerous small tributaries. Only the Black Volta flows

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the Niger-Congo family of African languages.[6] Like the Mossi, these groups are primarily horticultural; cereals are their main crops, and they cultivate yams where conditions permit. Their social organization takes both patrilineal and matrilineal forms. The veneration of ancestors lies at the core of their religious beliefs, but the existence of an otiose high god whose name contains the root *We* (*Ouennam, Win, Wene,* etc.) is also recognized. There are also tutelary spirits, the chief one being a female earth deity associated with We and called *Tenga* (also occurring as *Teng, Tena,* and *Ten*). The *Tengsobadamba,* who are priests or custodians of the earth shrines, are found among all the groups in the Voltaic family, and they often share leadership with more secular chiefs called *Naba, Na,* or *Nab.* Most of the ruling clans of the Voltaic groups claim common ancestry and acknowledge the same totems.[8]

The only glaring dissimilarity between these Voltaic peoples, and the one with which this study is primarily concerned, lies in the realm of political organization. Some are united into large kingdoms, while others form small acephalous groups. Delafosse makes the following generalizations about the smaller groups:

> It may be said of these people that, as a whole, they have remained quite primitive. With a few exceptions, they have not reached any significant level of political development; as a rule, they have not progressed beyond family unity. Although they neighbor on well-organized and powerful states such as the Mossi empires and the kingdoms of the Gourma and Bergo, which are inhabited by populations of the same ethnic group, they have derived little benefit from this proximity; some of them have been absorbed as subjects or vassals by these states, while others have remained on the outside, and seem to have but one purpose, the forceful preservation of their fierce but sterile independence. . . . Attachment to the land seems to be the only solid and fecund institution in their chaotic society.[7]

Rattray believes that the development of such highly organized political systems as those of the Mossi, Dagomba, and Mamprusi may be traced to "small bands of strangers." He thinks that the outsiders were better armed, better clothed, and familiar with the rudiments of Islam, and that since they knew about the institution of kingship, they were able to "superimpose upon the primitive tribes among whom they settled a new and unheard-of political conception, namely the idea of territorial and secular leadership in place of the immemorial institution of a ruler who was the high priest of a totemic clan and dealt only in spiritual sanctions." Nevertheless, Rattray is not certain that the Voltaic groups would not have evolved complex political systems if they had been left to themselves. He makes the significant statement that if the subjugation by the bands of strangers had not

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taken place, the local earth-priest or priest-king "undoubtedly would have evolved into the type of native ruler . . . who was not only high priest and custodian of the land of his tribe and of the ancestral spirits but one who was a chief or king on a territorial basis, whose sanctions were secular and physical rather than spiritual; in other words, what the average European implies when he uses the word 'king' or 'chief.' "[8]

Since pristine state development has occurred so seldom, it is difficult to evaluate Rattray's speculations about the possible local development of complex political forms. Nevertheless, his view that bands of strangers were responsible for state formation in the area is supported by most of the local traditions.

The relationship between the Voltaic peoples and the bands of strangers has not received the attention it deserves. In fact, the implications of such a relationship have often been underrated. As a result, groups that may once have been part of larger political entities created by these strangers have been regarded as acephalous, that is, as having very weak chiefs or no chiefs at all. In his studies of the Tallensi of northern Ghana, for example, Fortes constantly refers to a group of lineages called *Namoos,* whose members claim to be descended from the Mamprusi ruling group. He states that a Tallensi chief from the Tongo area claimed to be "the ruler of all the Tallensi." In another context Fortes discusses the status of a chief called *Kuna'aba,* who, he tells us, is regarded by the other Tallensi chiefs as their "father," to whom they owe "loyalty, respect, and ceremonial deference." Moreover, Fortes indicates that ceremonial investiture by Kuna'aba is "the crucial act conferring chiefship" on a Tale, even if the latter is actually selected by an administrative officer.[9] These facts should have indicated to Fortes that he was dealing with a rather complex historical problem that required further investigation.

Instead of carrying the investigation further, however, he dismisses the Tongo chief's claim of control over all Taleland with the assertion that "it is a distortion in terms of the modern privileges of chiefship, of a status which is merely that of *primus inter pares* in the native system." Similarly, he doubts the historical status and role of Kuna'aba: "Kuna'aba's modern judicial and administrative authority rests solely on the sanction of force represented by the [British] Administration." Interestingly enough, Fortes tells us that "the Administration has always regarded Taleland as part of the 'Mamprusi State,' under the ultimate rule of the chief of Mampurugu, through his sub-chief and deputy, the Kuna'aba, who was considered to have full jurisdiction over the 'Kurugu Division.' "[10]

Rattray, whose study of the Tallensi predates Fortes', declares that the

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all the people he found there and seizing all the goods he could find, he burned the city and returned to his own country. The peoples of Mali returned afterwards to Timbuktu and remained there for the next hundred years.[20]

The Yatenga Mossi subsequently warred upon and defended themselves against the Songhai, who had tried to force Islam upon them. The Mossi were among the strongest peoples in the Niger bend area when the Moroccans arrived in 1591, and there were no wars between these two groups.

There has been a great deal of discussion among scholars of Sudanese history about the relationship between the Mossi expeditions into the Niger area and the power of early Mossi kingdoms. Marc believes that the Mossi reached their zenith late in the fifteenth century, when they attacked Walata and Timbuktu for the second time. He writes, "It was undoubtedly during this period that they extended their influence over all the territories where their language is spoken at the present day."[21]

On the other hand, Tauxier believes that the Mossi reached their apogee much earlier, toward the end of the fourteenth century. He notes that this was the period when the Mossi were "propelled by a powerful drive of expanding conquest," which carried them to Timbuktu and its neighboring regions.[22] With the recapture of Timbuktu by Mansa Souliman, however, they turned back and firmly established themselves in Gourma and Yange to the east of Ouagadougou, and among non-Mossi populations in Ouahigouya and Ouagadougou. Tauxier believes that this southern drive made the Mossi sufficiently powerful to reinvade the Niger area and thus control a territory extending from Gambaga in the south up to Timbuktu and Djenne in the north. This second period of success came to a close when the Mossi were defeated by Askia the Great of Songhai in 1497, and by Askia Daoud in 1549 and 1561. After these defeats, they not only abandoned their territories north of Ouahigouya but withdrew into their present boundaries. Tauxier concludes that from this time onward, the bonds between the different Mossi kingdoms grew weaker and the power of Ouagadougou waned.

At the same time, the Mossi kingdoms, principalities, and districts developed their internal structure and continued to absorb the Ninisi population. They also welcomed the Moslem Yarse merchants and refugees who settled in their country and adopted most aspects of their culture.[23] These Yarse refugees were joined by Mandingo-Dioula and Soninke Moslem refugees, who entered Mossi country as the result of wars or rebellions in such places as Djenne, Segou, and Timbuktu. The sheltering of these refugees by the Mossi eventually led to a series of wars between them and

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cause he thought Sanum had attacked him unjustly. For such acts of war, the Dimdamba involved usually lost their lives, and in at least one such case a Dim was turned over to the Mogho Naba by another Dim. We have seen that Dimdamba occasionally came to the aid of the Mogho Naba against another Dim.

A question of some importance is whether this relationship between the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou and the rulers of independent kingdoms and autonomous principalities was characteristic of Mossi society or a rather late development. Was warfare the natural concomitant of a system in which the normally powerful Ouagadougou ruler was sometimes too weak to command allegiance from his peers and subordinates? Did the Mogho Naba resort to warfare as the only possible means of exercising his authority when his commands were challenged or ignored? Delafosse states, "Sometimes . . . , especially in very recent times, discord arose between the emperor [of Ouagadougou] and some of his vassal kings: thus Naba Sanum had to fight against the desire for independence of the kings of Boussouma and Boulsa."[16] Delafosse seems to suggest that the Mossi people were undergoing a period of stress when the Europeans arrived, and were faced with significant new administrative problems.

Here Binger appears to support Delafosse's view:

> Ever since he acceded to the throne, [Mogho Naba Sanum] has been compelled to govern the Mossi with unmitigated despotism. His fear of losing power led him to take such severe measures that he was forced to relax them. As soon as his major vassals saw this, they took these concessions as signs of fear and began to conspire secretly against him. Today, the chiefs of Mani, Boussouma, Yako, and Koupela represent forces with which Naba Sanum will have to reckon. . . . Before long, the Mossi empire will break up; the country will organize into confederacies like those of Beledougou and Yatenga.[17]

It is not completely clear, however, whether Binger really understood the intricacies of the Mossi political organization. He lists as "vassals" of the Mogho Naba such territories as Mane, Kaya, Koupela, Bonsa, Boussouma, Djitenga, Boulsa, Dakay, and Doulougou, as though they were all related to Ouagadougou in the same way. In reality, some were autonomous and some were directly dependent on the Ouagadougou ruler. It is possible that at the time of Binger's visit, the relations between the Mogho Naba and his subordinates were so fluid that the outsider had difficulty in understanding them. If this is the case, then the situation in Mossi country had indeed changed when the Europeans came in.

Crozat, who says the Mossi governmental structure was feudal in na-

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642 66

631 ture, offers what is probably the best analysis of power relations among the
628 important Mossi chiefs. In commenting upon the Mogho Naba's inability
● 174 to stop the war between Yako and Yatenga he asks, "How could it be
114 otherwise? With what sanctions could this king without an army back up his orders if he ventured to give any? . . . In short, when the Ouagadougou ruler speaks, he is sometimes obeyed. If he is, all is well; if he is not, all is still well. Everything remains as before."[18] Crozat was mistaken if he believed that the Mogho Naba did not have a fighting force. What he did not have was a standing army to exercise his power whenever he wished. When he was able to summon an army, he was effective; when he was not, he had little power over any territory but his own. Crozat, like Binger, gives a strange picture of the political relationship between the Mogho Naba and the other rulers. He tells us that in the Mossi political hierarchy, "after the ruler of Ouagadougou comes the ruler of Boussouma, then the Yatenga ruler, and then the ruler of Yako."[19] Yatenga was traditionally independent of Ouagadougou, whereas Boussouma and Yako were simply autonomous principalities dependent on the Mogho Naba. It is possible that Crozat mistook the relative power of these various political entities for a hierarchical relationship. It is also possible that at the time of his visit, the Dimdamba felt sufficiently powerful to ignore the traditional hierarchy as far as their political relationship with other rulers was concerned, and were simply acknowledging relative gradations of power.

643 Clearly, the sovereignty of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou over the
642 independent kingdoms and autonomous principalities depended chiefly on
628 military might. The stronger a Mogho Naba was, the more actively he tried to control the internal administration of the autonomous principalities and to exercise police powers over them or on their behalf. However, most Mogho Nanamse were content to claim superiority or control over the independent kingdoms and refrained from meddling in their affairs.

643 Within the Mogho Naba's own kingdom, however, the situation was
635 different. Here, like other important Mossi rulers, he directed the admin-
634 istrative apparatus. For administrative purposes, the kingdom of Ouaga-
[642 dougou was divided into five large provinces (*weto*; sing. *weogho*; or
[161 *solem*, from *so*, "command"). Together they included some three hundred districts, in which there were over four thousand villages inhabited by some 862,000 persons.[20] (Not included here were districts and villages directly administered by the Mogho Naba.) The provinces were not compact physical entities, because their component units were scattered throughout the country. To be sure, some of the districts within a province were close together or even contiguous, but many others stood alongside districts be-

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ruler to grant asylum to Mogho Naba Wobogo in 1897. He adds that it was probably the injunction in the pact that they should never meet which prevented the ruler from personally receiving Wobogo.[13]

A ritual pact also bound the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou to the ruler of Dagomba. He sent him goods from the estate of the previous Mogho Naba as well as gifts for yearly sacrifices on the grave of Nyennega, the Mossi progenitrix. There are reports that the Ouagadougou ruler also exchanged annual presents with the Ashanti ruler, but it is not known whether these were courtesy gifts or goods sanctioning ritual pacts.

The ritual pacts among Mossi kingdoms and between them and their neighbors appear to have derived from actual or putative kinship ties. This seems to be supported not only by the traditions of the Mossi but also by those of the surrounding peoples. Whatever their origin, these pacts seem to have afforded their beneficiaries a remarkable degree of freedom from external aggression. It is possible that the Mossi and their neighbors really believed in the efficacy of supernatural sanctions, for purposes of mutual protection. But one suspects that it was the relative weakness of these various groups that caused them to rely on supernatural agencies rather than military might for protection. As will be pointed out below, the Mossi (and probably all of their important neighbors) had considerable difficulty in building and maintaining a fighting force sufficiently large to wage protracted or large-scale wars against foreign groups.

The Mossi kingdoms seldom fought among themselves, although their leaders quarreled over status and committed aggression against each other's territories. For example, the Ouagadougou rulers, who claimed suzerainty over Yatenga, often tried to impose their will on that kingdom. Yet, although they were usually rebuffed by the Yatenga Naba, they never tried to resolve the issue by force of arms. In fact, even when a Yatenga ruler appears to have given the Mogho Naba just cause for war, little fighting actually took place. Several times the Yatenga rulers seized such principalities as Riziam and Yako, which were dependent on Ouagadougou, but in no case did the Ouagadougou rulers wage war against them. In 1890, Crozat witnessed Mogho Naba Wobogo's attempt to stop a war between Yatenga and Yako. The Yako people wanted to obey their sovereign and stop the war, but the Yatenga monarch refused to do so.[14]

Crozat attributes the ineffectiveness of the Mogho Naba's authority over brother kingdoms to the fact that he had no standing army with which to enforce his rule. While relative strength may have been and probably was the main reason for the Mogho Naba's lack of aggressiveness, the ritual pact that prevented the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou from meeting the

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Marc, who had the opportunity to check the volume of this trade in 1904 and 1905, estimates that about 16,000 head of cattle and 75,000 sheep and goats passed through the two customs posts in Mossi country. Furthermore, he believes that since "the Mossi also supply in part the markets of Togoland and the market at Bondoukou [Ivory Coast], one may assume a minimum annual export of 20,000 head of cattle and 100,000 sheep or goats. The import of kola nuts is at least 500 tons."[11] It is clear that this volume of trade could not have been achieved so soon after the French conquest. We can only conclude that it existed prior to the coming of the Europeans, and that it brought the Mossi rulers a considerable income.

The Mogho Naba's officials collected taxes from all caravans that passed through his capital. The caravaneers also gave the Mogho Naba important gifts, and he apparently traded with them, even if always to his own profit. Binger states that Mogho Naba Sanum forced horse traders from the Yatenga and Hausa merchants to sell him part of their commodities at one-hundredth the purchase price.[12] Crozat reports that Mogho Naba Wobogo

> appears to have had some business relations with white merchants who came to Salaga every dry season. He sent horses to them in exchange for silver. He claims that he had no reason to be pleased with their integrity, and that the silver they sent him contained plenty of copper. Some traders apparently came as far as Ouagadougou, bringing merchandise of German origin. There was one of them there during my stay. I was told that he was an important *marabout*, a shereef, perhaps an Arab or a Moor, for I was assured that he was very light in color. As was repeated to me several times, his relations with the king were limited to the solemn greetings on Fridays. He never entered the royal hut in spite of being an important marabout. He was at Ouagadougou for about three and one-half months, but he was compelled to return to the coast since the merchandise which he had brought was exhausted. He spoke no Mossi.[13]

All the caravans that passed through Mossi country were obliged to stop and give presents to the district officials. Those caravaneers who tried to elude taxation by going through the forest ran the risk of being attacked by local nobles, who usually confiscated their goods.

The Mogho Naba and the lesser chiefs had "market officials" who taxed the merchants in the markets of their territories. The officials at Ouagadougou, the Kos Naba ("sales chief") and the Raga Naba ("market chief"), were fairly rigorous in their exactions. The Kos Naba collected taxes in cowries for every cow slaughtered at the market, and also took its hump and gave it to the Nemdo Naba ("meat chief") for distribution in the royal household. He also collected taxes on every cow sold in the market, but

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NOTES

Complete authors' names, titles, and publication data are given in the Bibliography, pp. 225–27. 000

CHAPTER ONE

1. Murdock states, "The large Gourma and Mossi tribes in the north of the [Voltaic] province have had strong states for at least the past 800 years and have frequently warred with their powerful neighbors on the Niger. . . . Their culture probably reflects fairly closely what that of the Mande must have been prior to their embarkation on a career of empire building and to the advent of the Berbers and Arabs from the north" (Murdock, p. 78. Cf. Greenberg, "Negro Kingdoms," p. 130, and Forde, p. 206). [174]

2. Binger states, "There does not exist one type general enough to permit one to say: there is a Mossi type. One meets people who resemble the Wolof; others who look like Mandingo from the banks of the Niger; and yet others who resemble the Hausa" (Binger, II, 491). Tauxier, on the other hand, reports that the nobles' faces were totally different from the Negroes'. According to him, the physiognomies of the nobles were "Semitic" and "truly distinguished" (*Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 578–79). However, judging from the physiognomies of the three most recent Mogho Naamse, one could make the equally erroneous generalization that the ruling group was the most Negroid of the entire Mossi population. [142] [144]

3. Barth, III, 202, 643; Dubois, p. 300.

4. Delafosse, I, 115.

5. Greenberg, "Languages," p. 8.

6. See Cardinall, *passim*, and Rattray, I, x, xi.

7. Maurice Delafosse, *Negroes of Africa* (Washington, D.C., 1931), p. 101.

8. Rattray, I, xxii, xi.

9. Fortes, "Political System," pp. 255–57.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Rattray, I, 343.

12. Cf. Cardinall, pp. 1–14, and Rattray, *passim*.

13. Dim Delobson claims that this took place toward the end of the tenth century (p. 2). Delafosse believes the date to be about 1030 A.D. (I, 306). After comparing the dates of many scholars, Tauxier felt that this event occurred around 1233 A.D. (*Le Noir du Yatenga*, p. 672). Most contemporary Mossi believe that it occurred during the eleventh century. [174]

14. According to a belief found among the people of Nobere district, Nedega gave his daughter permission to search for a husband and she went northward into Busansi country, where an old woman found her a husband named Rialle. Still another tradition states that she became pregnant by an animal and fled north from the anger

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9. In Dim Delobson's account (p. 60), an unnamed wife of the Mogho Naba ran away, and he allegedly tried to follow her because she was the only person in his household who knew how to cook his favorite food. 000

It is interesting that the Mossi have a tradition in which their ruler undergoes the same experience as many a Mossi husband, namely, being betrayed by his wife. It is also interesting that Mogho Naba Waraga is the ruler named in this incident. He is the ruler who waged a five-year-long civil war with one of his vassals. It may well be that his ministers devised the myth about his wife in order to prevent him from leaving the capital to fight. [837]

10. The Mossi practice of tasting food before giving it to another person is obviously connected with the fear of poison. The Mossi believe that only a boorish person would give another person something to eat without first tasting it himself. [576]

11. The full significance of this ceremony is unclear, for the Mossi hesitate to talk about it. It is known that the "sacred fire" is linked to the nocturnal visits of the royal ancestors. But the relationship of the fire to another sacred fire kept in Koubri district (about seventeen miles from Ouagadougou) is not known. [372]

Faithful to Mossi tradition or ignorant of the true nature of the ceremony, Dim Delobson says nothing about the ceremony and does not mention the presence of the namtibo. However, he does report that the palace guards would kill anyone who approached the place where the rite was being performed (p. 62). [114]

12. There are several traditions concerning female regents. However, I believe that they may have their basis in the role the Mogho Naba's daughter played during the interregnum.

13. Mossi genealogies show that only in one case in which the nam passed from a Mogho Naba to his brother did the former Mogho Naba's sons receive districts from their uncle, the new ruler. Since it is difficult to believe that the eleven other Mogho Nanamse who were succeeded by their brothers died without issue, it can only be concluded that the descendants of a ruler who did not inherit the nam were ignored by their uncles in power.

14. To this council could be added other men whose experience was valued. For example, the Baloum Naba was called upon in 1942 to give advice about a successor to Kom.

15. Dim Delobson, pp. 130–32.

16. It is interesting that the sheepskin garb of the Mossi pretenders is similar to the dress of the chiefs among the smaller tribal groups of the Voltaic culture area. If we can assume that culture traits characteristic of ritual and ceremonial practices tend to persist longer than most other traits, we might have evidence that the complex Mossi state evolved from the political organizations found among the smaller local groups. [171] [174]

17. The "naming of a name" speech is part of most Mossi *rites de passage*, and is often used to brag about some achievement or to cast aspersions on one's enemies. Most newly elected monarchs pledge good government, brag about their elevation, and vilify their enemies.

In his inaugural speech Naba Kom II said, "When plenty of water falls during the rainy season, the rivers and seas are glad because they are enlarged." "Kom" means "water," and Kom's speech meant that he pledged to bring happiness to all his subjects.

Boukary Koutou insulted his listeners by declaring, "Even if a hundred ghosts join together, they cannot harm an elephant." He was called Mogho Naba Wobogo ("elephant").

18. It is said that if the amulets were stolen during the interregnum, the thief had to be elected Mogho Naba; if they were stolen afterwards, the ruler lost the basis for the mystical quality of leadership and authority he had inherited from his ancestors.

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000 19. There is a curious story among the people of Nobere district that Mogho Naba Mottoba (who reigned in the seventeenth century) was not a Mossi but a Fulani who was given the nam after he chanced upon the installation ceremony and assassinated the newly elected man during the night. This story is denied in Ouagadougou; in fact, it contradicts the genealogical records of the ruling dynasty. However, the genealogy does show that Mottoba's father, Mogho Naba Guiliga, had succeeded his brother, and it is possible that there was dynastic rivalry for the nam between Mottoba and the former Mogho Naba's son.

[174]

20. This rite was performed during the installation of the present Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, although it is hardly recognizable as described in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48): "A man named Moussa Congo assumed the name of Kougri Naba last week and became the 35th Mogho Naba of the Mossi in the capital city of Ouagadougou in the Upper Volta region of French West Africa. Son of Emperor Issoufou Congo, Kougri Naba, as the new Mogho Naba, has one white horse, 200 wives, and 8,000 warriors, who danced around his palace ten times."

[182]

21. This practice has apparently lapsed since Mogho Naba Kougri moved into the modern concrete palace built for his father, Mogho Naba Sagha II.

[838]

22. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 569–70. Tauxier claims the Mogho Nanamse used the pages for homosexual purposes on Fridays in order to circumvent the Moslem prohibition against intercourse with women on this holy day. Homosexuality is rare among the Mossi, as Tauxier himself admits, and most Mossi deny that the Mogho Nanamse ever resorted to it. However, one respondent did state that he had heard about homosexuality among certain past rulers.

23. Crozat, p. 4849.

[648] [762] [797]

24. When Mogho Naba Kom II died under mysterious circumstances in 1942, it was rumored that he had committed suicide rather than reduce the number of his wives as ordered by the administration under the influence of the Catholic missionaries. Kom allegedly held that no one can inherit a sovereign's wife during his lifetime. Therefore, in order to avoid loss of status by seeing his wives go to commoners, he chose death so they would be inherited by nobles.

[114]

25. The statement in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48) that Kougri has two hundred wives is untrue.

[563]

26. Intermarriage between the Mossi and the Fulani has produced a people known as the Simili-Mossi. Nevertheless, the Mossi are strongly prejudiced against the Fulani, especially against the women, stating that the Moaga who has sexual intercourse with a Fulani woman must bathe in nine different rivers before he becomes clean. The basis of this prejudice appears to be that Fulani women are not cultivators and therefore are unacceptable as Mossi wives.

27. Mossi women know a great deal about the history and traditions of their people. But they never indicate that they do except during such rituals, when they are required to play certain roles.

28. Dim Delobson, p. 96.

29. Dim Delobson (p. 101) states that there are "sacred things" in this village, but I have been unable to substantiate his report.

[824]

30. Dim Delobson (p. 104) gives the classic explanation of this nighttime ride. On his ride from Bere to Djiba, the mounted prince must try to touch a certain branch of a certain tree. If he is destined to succeed his father, he will succeed in touching the branch; if he is not, the branch will magically withdraw at his approach.

I visited the area in which this ritual reportedly took place, but the people in the vicinity denied that such a tree existed.

[648]

31. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

32. IFAN (Compte Rendu No. 429). There are many other rumors concerning Kom's death. In a book praising the loyalty of the Africans to the Free French Gov-

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CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Dim Delobson, pp. 153ff.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 251–54.
3. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 674.
4. Crozat, p. 4849.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Skinner, "Trade and Markets," pp. 237–78.
7. Barth, III, 644–49.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 202–4.
9. Dubois, pp. 282–92, 300.
10. Great Britain, Parliamentary papers: Cd. 788–27, No. 357, Acc. Papers, Vol. LXIV (1902).
11. Marc, p. 178.
12. Binger, I, 467.
13. Crozat, p. 4849.
14. Binger, I, 465.
15. Mangin, p. 23.
16. Dim Delobson, pp. 85–86.
17. Ruelle, p. 679.
18. Bovill, p. 244.
19. Gautier, p. 139; cf. Mangin, p. 112.
20. Cf. Sa'di, p. 168.
21. The chief of the Kamboinse was the only Mossi "chief" to possess a stool, which is indicative of an Akan origin. The Akan origin of this group is further supported by Koelle's evidence: a Mossi informant told him that the Mossi called the Ashanti "Kamboinse" (Koelle, p. 6).
22. Skinner, "The Mossi 'Pogsioure,'" pp. 20–22.
23. Cf. Ouédraogo and Prost, pp. 16–18.
24. Dim Delobson, p. 25.
25. Binger, I, 470.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 502–4.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 504–5.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 502.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Cf. Dim Delobson, p. 156. He speculates that the Mogho Naba himself sacrificed the animals in the presence of his senior wife and courtiers.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
3. Tauxier (*Le Noir du Yatenga*, p. 379) reports that a comparable ceremony among the Yatenga Mossi was called the "Bega," and that in reality it was a Fulse ceremony "adopted by the Mossi." According to him, both the Fulse and the Mossi held this festival in order to obtain good harvests the following year, and made sacrifices to "the ancestors, to the Earth, and to God."
4. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 588.
5. Dim Delobson's description (pp. 148 ff) of the Tense differs somewhat from that given to me by my respondents. According to his version, the Tansoba played the role I have ascribed to the Larhalle Naba. Furthermore, he states that the Tense was held on Friday, an impossible fact since Saturday is the Mossi "day of the dead." In any case, all of my respondents insisted that Saturday, and not Friday, was the day on which the Tense was held. It is possible that Dim Delobson mistook the eve of the festival for its beginning, in which case his error is understandable. In most other respects our descriptions are not too different.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
7. There is a widespread tradition in Mossi country that the Tenkodogo Naba made and still makes similar sacrifices at Kouroungoutenga and Sansabloga, two important earth shrines. There is a controversy about whether human sacrifices were ever offered there. The missionaries in the region claim they were. The Mossi deny this and accuse the missionaries of slander.

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8. Cf. Marc, p. 156. 9. Cf. Fortes, pp. 258–71.
10. Skinner, "The Diffusion of Islam," pp. 659–69.
11. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 585–86.
12. Dim Delobson, p. 205. 13. Crozat, p. 4820.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 4822. 15. *Ibid.*, p. 4835.
16. Binger, I, 452. 17. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 452–56.
19. Archives, Document 15G-190 (1897–98). Instructions left to Captain Scal by Destenave, June 1897.

CHAPTER NINE

1. Marc, p. 17.

2. Barth, III, 595. Although it is possible that the Wolof prince Bemoy did hear about the Mossi, he was mistaken about the name of their ruler. Interestingly enough, the title "Ogane" is not too dissimilar from Hogon, the title of head men among the Dogon (Habe or Kado) whom the Mossi had pushed into the hills of Bandiagara. Cf. Bascom, p. 24.

3. Barth, III, 606. 4. Bowdich, p. 180.
5. Dupuis, Appendix CVII. 6. Clapperton, II, 323.

7. Barth, III, 643–49. As cited earlier, Barth states that the Portuguese got reports about the Mossi in the year 1533 "from the wrong side, namely from Benin." This may not have been altogether "the wrong side," however, for Barth gives us data on caravans from Mossi country to Sansane Mango in Togoland that indicate how news about the Mossi might have traveled from the interior to Benin city in Nigeria.

8. Koelle, p. 6. Dixon, who seems to have been one of the few captured Mossi sold to the West, reports: "Mose is west of Gurma, east of Andemtenga, where a different language is spoken. Mose is also two days journey from Butmera, where the same language is spoken; four days from Bulega [Bolga tanga], the language still the same, and confederate with Kambonse, i.e. Asante; two days from Yaongo, with still the same language; six days from Bosanse which is at enmity with Mose and where people bore their lips, and often tie them together with grass, and whose language is different from Mose; four days from Busma also a different language, and in which country there is a very high mountain (Tanga) from which those who ascend never come back again [probably a reference to Plimpikou, the Mossi holy mountain]; three or four weeks from Kambonse, i.e. Asante. Kupeala is four days from Wardyga [Ouagadougou] the Mossi capital, whither the king of Asante often sent presents; and one month from Salak [Salaga], an Asante town, where they bring kola nuts."

9. Marc, p. 30.

10. Great Britain, Parliamentary papers xlvi, 1882.

11. The people of Nobere, Manga, and other districts surrounding Bere have traditions about Krause, who is remembered as the first white-skinned person ever seen in those parts. The color of his skin was attributed to the fact that, "like the fish," he had come out of the sea.

12. Krause, pp. 92 ff. Although there is no evidence to this effect in the literature, it appears certain that Mossi government officials knew of Krause's visit. They treated most travelers in the following manner: "After entering a town the party is given in charge of a man usually termed 'housemaster.' It is his duty to exercise surveillance over the action of the stranger and to report the result to the authorities. . . . The trader conducts his business through his 'housemaster,' who usually makes a handsome gain by acting as middleman (G. E. Ferguson, quoted in Wolfson, p. 199).

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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long been famous. The former are sometimes ridden but are used primarily as beasts of burden. Horses were and are still important for military and ceremonial purposes and for external trade to other areas.

The Mossi have never excelled in metalworking. The people in the northern part of the country have worked indigenous ores since aboriginal times. Those in the south get iron mainly from traders and caravans. The other metals which the Mossi smiths manufacture into tools and ornaments are also obtained from traders.

TRADE IN HISTORICAL TIMES

The geographic position of Mossi country has much to do with its being an important trade and market center. The country itself has always produced grain, cotton and livestock for export. And for several centuries caravans have passed through this region carrying Sudanese and Saharan products to the forest zones to the south, and carrying forest products back to the arid north. The beginning of this trade is lost in the dim past, but it safe to say that it developed shortly after or along with the founding of Timbuktu about 1100 A.D. The Mossi themselves were not definitely linked to this important *entrepot* until they raided it in 1328, but we can assume that they had been trading there for some time before that event took place. Similarly, we have no record of when the Mossi began trading with the forest zones, but we can also assume that this trade began around the same period or even before.

Our first evidence of Mossi trade and commerce comes from Europeans who were themselves interested in conducting their own trading activities with the peoples in the Bend of the Niger. Bowditch, an Englishman who had journeyed to Ashanti to sign a treaty facilitating the reopening of a profitable trade with the coast, wangled the first important piece of information about the Mossi from his reluctant hosts:

> Five journies from Yngwa is Mosee, a more warlike but less visited kingdom: it consists of many states, but the superior monarch is named Billa, and the capital Kookoopella. I place it to the N.W. because its merchants pass by Yngwa; they do not cross the Karhalla [White Volta] nor any river which is not fordable. (Bowditch 1819 : 180)

This information is not strictly correct since Koupela was not the capital of any of the Mossi kingdoms, but Bowditch's informant had probably heard of Koupela because it was the largest political entity near the large caravan center at Pouitenga.